

Court Improvement Training Academy

*Evolve Leadership  
to Promote Justice  
in Child Welfare*

**Introduction to the ABA  
Safety Guide for Judges  
and Lawyers**

---

**A Practical Learning Experience**



# ***Speed networking***

- 1. What do you hope is accomplished during this training program?**
- 2. What will you contribute to the use of this framework in your court?**

A serene sunset scene over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange glow and a long, shimmering reflection on the water's surface. In the background, a range of dark mountains is silhouetted against the sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

**9 Why's:  
Finding Clarity and Purpose...**

**Why do you  
work in the child  
welfare court  
system?**

# **Child Safety Framework**

---

**A  
Language and  
Structure for  
Decision-  
Making  
In  
Dependency  
Court**





Greater Breadth of Discussion at initial hearing ...

- **Increased rate of appearance of parties at subsequent hearings**
- **Higher likelihood of placement with parents or kin at immediately subsequent hearings (following six months)**
- **Increase in services ordered for both parents**
- **Earlier permanency and closure of case, and increase in reunification as case outcome**
- **Enhancing the level of discussion at the preliminary hearing can be initiated by any of the professionals.**

Alicia Summers, Sophia I. Gatowski, Melissa Gueller (2017). *The relationship between breadth of discussion and case outcomes.*

## Safety Assessment

- Gathering Information
- Foundation for case analysis

## Safety Plans

- Based on Safety Assessment
- In-Home
- Out-of-Home

## Conditions for Return

- Based on Safety Assessment
- Foundation for Case Plan

## Case Plan

- Based on Safety Assessment
- Eliminates Threats or Enhances Protective Capacity

## Progress, Reunification, Dismissal

- Judged against Safety Assessment
- Reunification  $\neq$  Dismissal



# The Judge Expects Information

## 6 Core Questions



1. What is the nature and extent of the maltreatment?
2. What circumstances accompany the maltreatment?
3. How does the child function day-to-day?
4. How does the parent discipline the child?
5. What are overall parenting practices?
6. How does the parent manage his/her own life?

**Threats**

**Are there sufficient  
protective capacities to  
protect child(ren) from  
threats to which they are  
vulnerable?**

**Vulnerabilities**

**Protective  
Capacities**



# Threats

- **Specific and Observable**
- **Out of Control**
- **Immediate or Liable to Happen Soon**
- **Severe Consequences**



# Vulnerabilities

- Child Specific
- Vulnerable or Not, Not Judged in Degrees
- If Threat Exists, Presume Vulnerability



# Protective Capacity

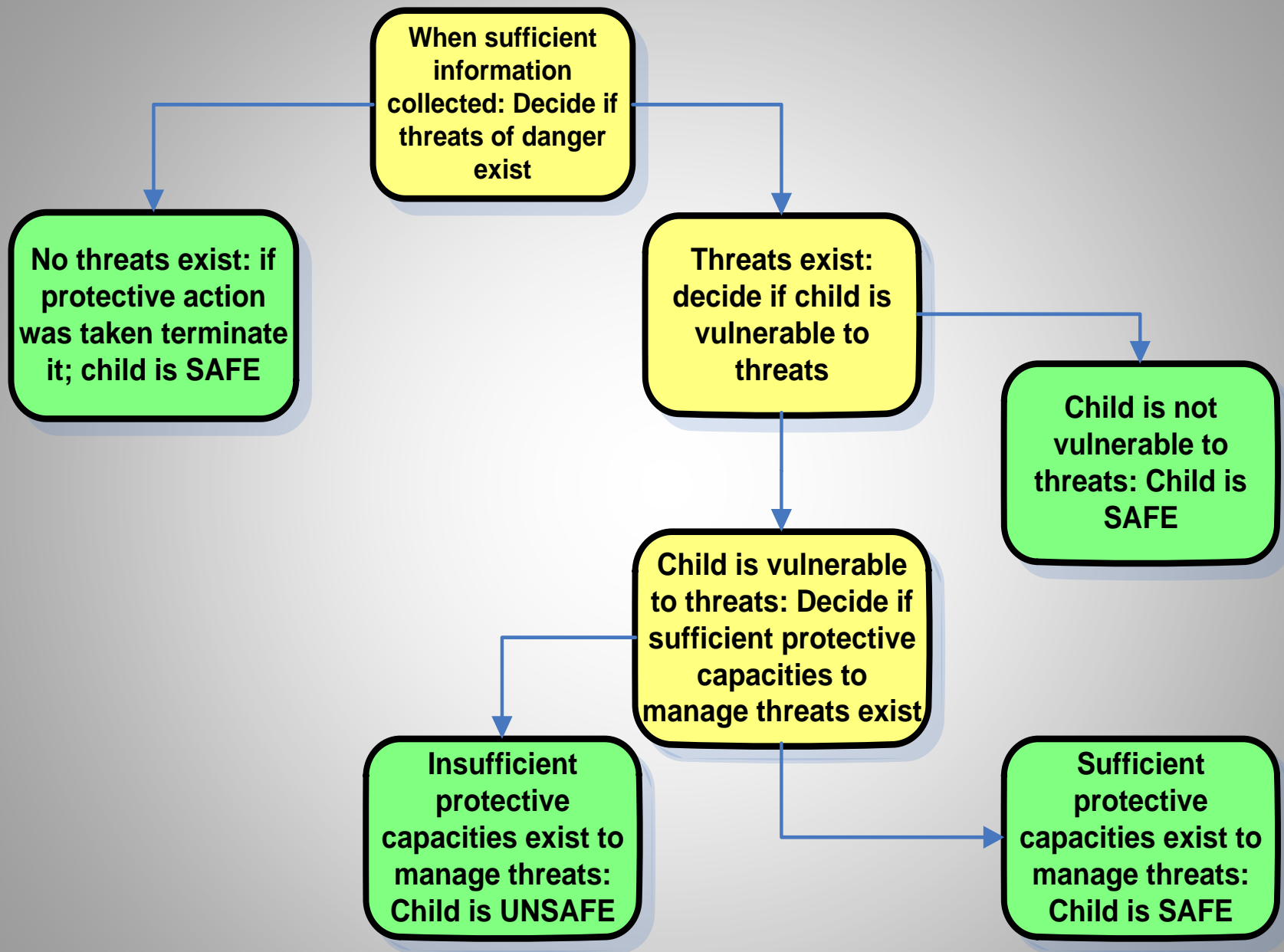
- Cognitive
- Behavioral
- Emotional





## Threat or No Threat?

- **Specific and Observable**
- **Out of Control**
- **Immediate or Liable to Happen Soon**
- **Severe Consequences**



# The Judge Expects Information

## 6 Core Questions



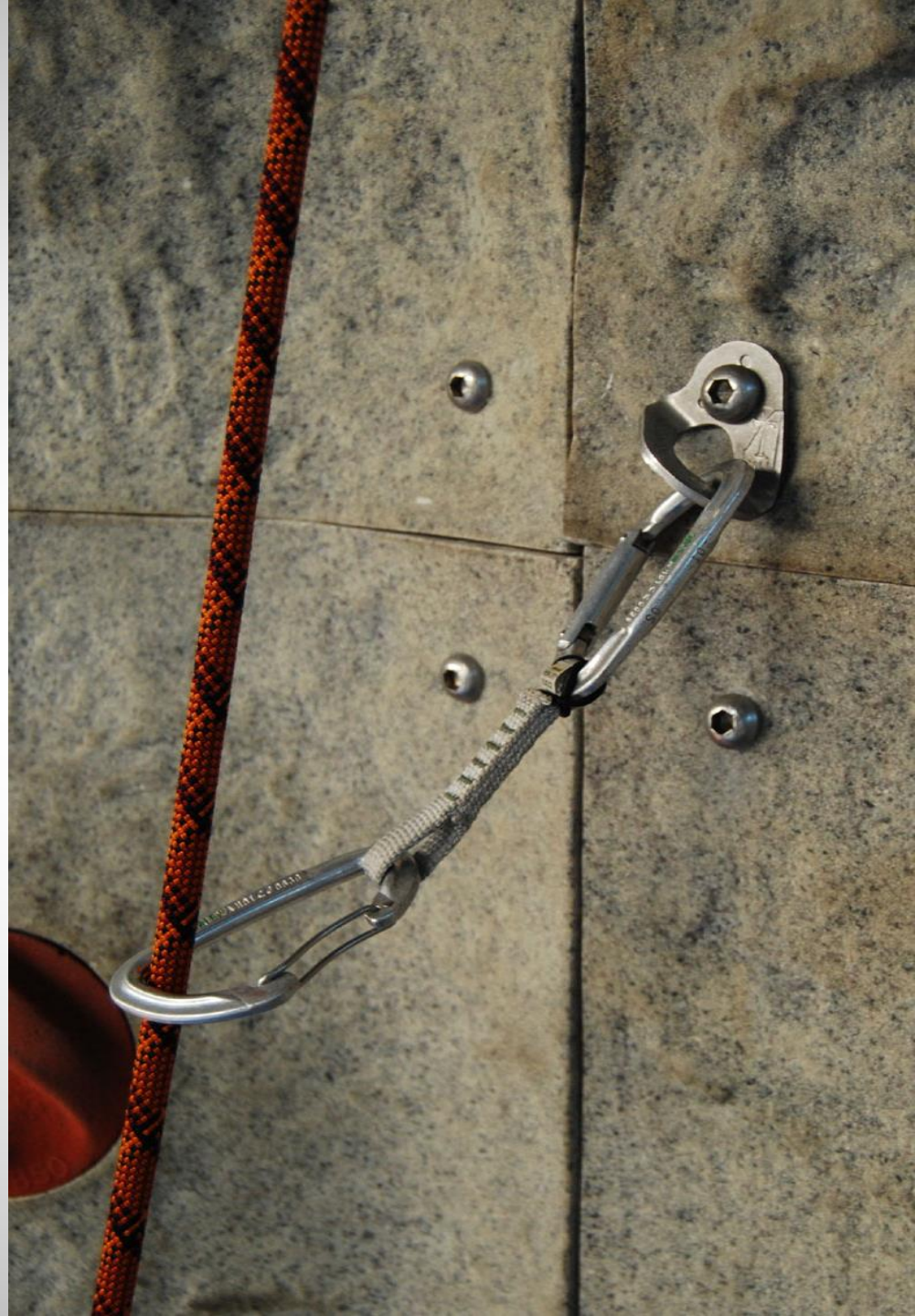
1. What is the nature and extent of the maltreatment?
2. What circumstances accompany the maltreatment?
3. How does the child function day-to-day?
4. How does the parent discipline the child?
5. What are overall parenting practices?
6. How does the parent manage his/her own life?

# Safety Planning

- Does not require change in parents behavior or attitude
  - Controls threats – immediately
- 

- Sufficient
  - Feasible
  - Sustainable
- 

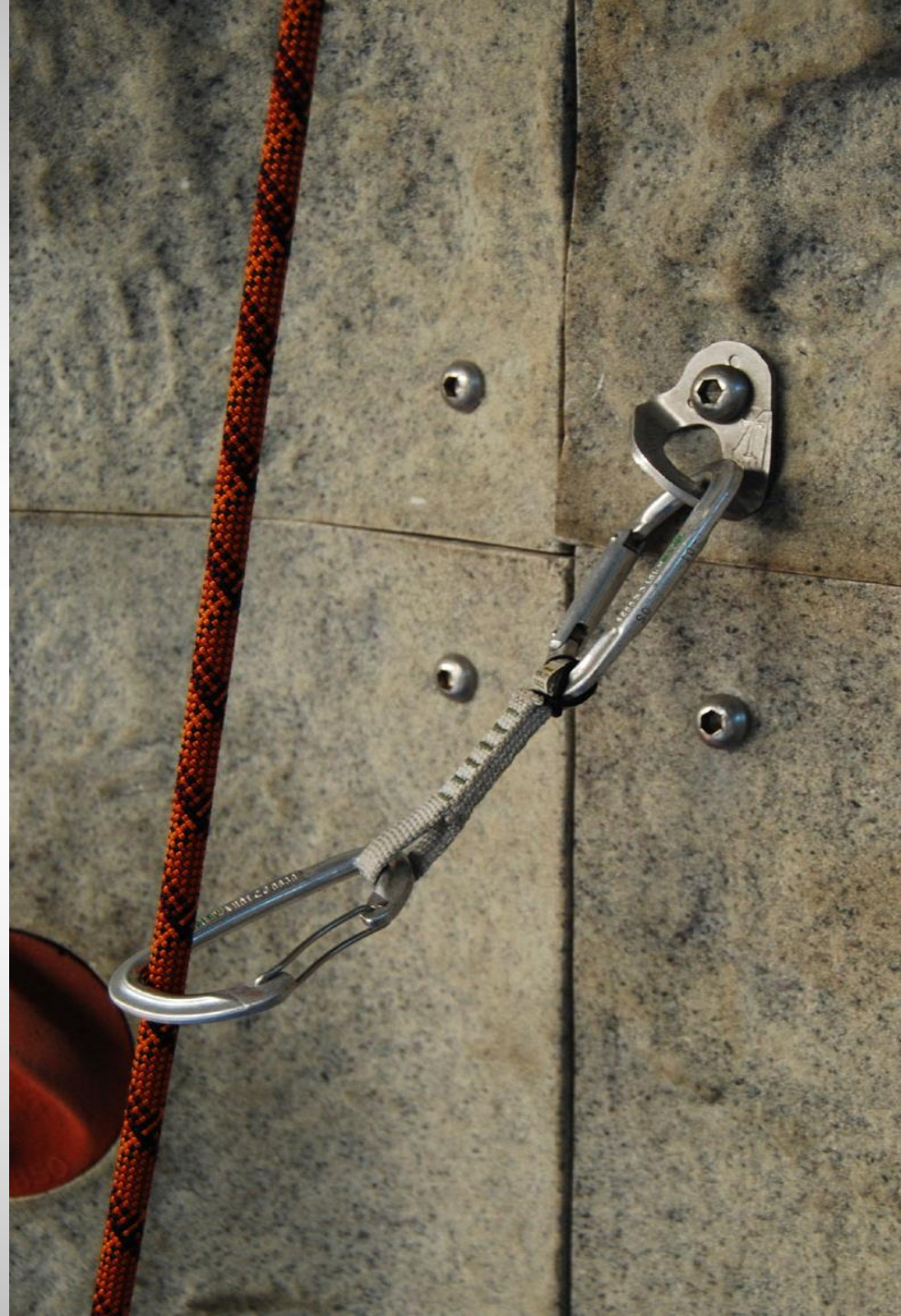
- Assessing Reasonable Efforts
  - Actions or Services to Control or Manage Threats



# Safety Planning

## Out-of Home Plan

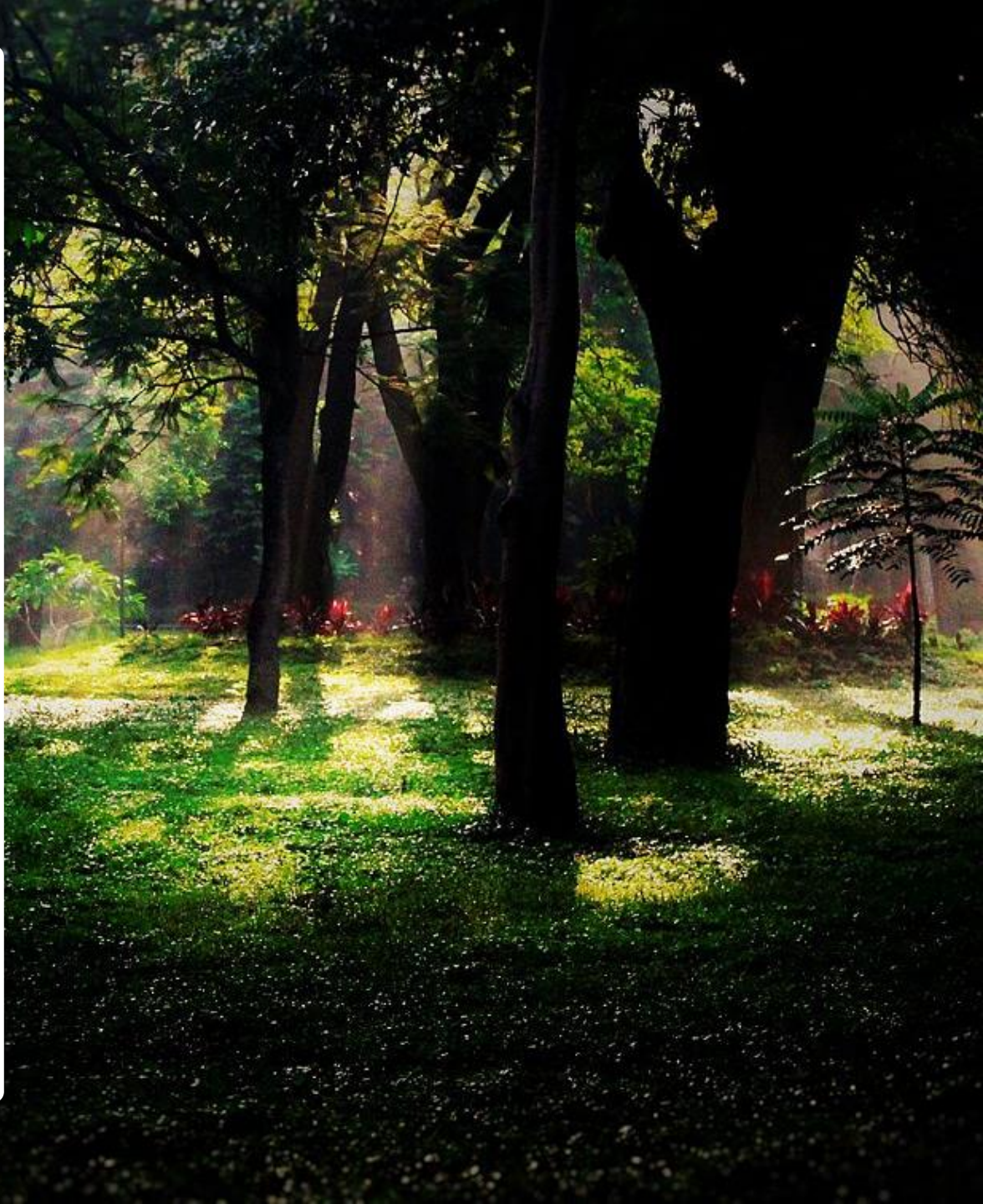
- **Assessing Reasonable Efforts**
- **Conditions for Return - Clearly**
  - **Value Congruence**
  - **Behavior/Circumstance-Based Language**
- **Kind and Amount of Parent-Child contact.**



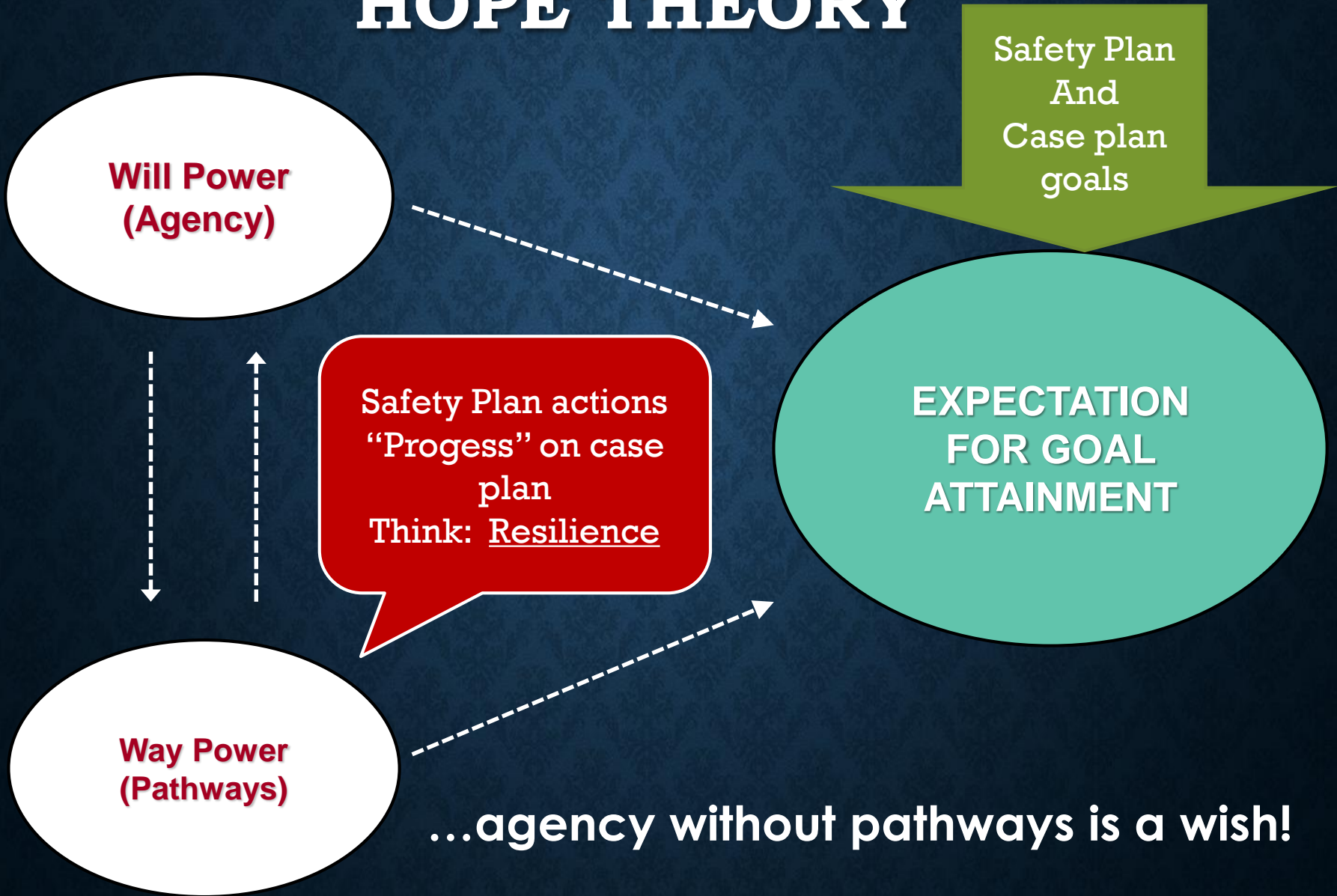


# Case Planning

- **Use Safety Framework to design case plan.**
- **Looking toward the Court and Dept exiting Family.**
- **Usually requires changing in parental behavior**



# HOPE THEORY



# Visitation Plans

- **Assess - Learn - Practice - Demonstrate**
- 

- **Quick to Start**
- **Include Siblings**
- **Alternative Contact**
- **Written Plan – Court Order**
- **Right of Family – Not Carrot-and-Stick**
- **Explain Supervision**
  - **How will it progress?**



# Evaluating Success

## Why Can't Children Go Home Today?

- Reduction of Threats? Emergence of New Threats?
- Status of Protective Capacity?
- Current Information for Answers?
- Why Disputes? Challenge Parties to Resolve.
- If no progress, why?
  - Demand Information/Perspective of Parents



# Reunification

- Have conditions changed enough to support an In-Home Safety Plan?  
Sustainable:
  - Can the plan be put into place?  
and can it work until it is no longer needed?
- Observe visits
  - Can unsupervised visits be happening now?
  - Are any of the visits structured to provide information about the child-parent relationship
- Parent Attitudes re: Threats and Protective Factors
- Info from Treatment Providers



# Reunification

- Are We Preparing the Care Provider to Support Reunification?
- Is the Recommendation of Social Worker Independent and Supported .
- Reunification is a Plan, not an event.



# Terminating Jurisdiction

- Threats Eliminated
- Protective Capacity Enhanced to Control Threats
- Combination of Both



Court Improvement Training Academy

*Evolve Leadership  
to Promote Justice  
in Child Welfare*

**Introduction to the ABA  
Safety Guide for Judges  
and Lawyers**

---

**A Practical Learning Experience**

