

Turning Questions into Conversations: EARS Questioning Strategy for Signs of Safety Mapping Using the Four Column Form

	WORRIES	STRENGTHS	GOALS	SAFETY ACTIONS
E licit First Question	What worries you about (child)? We have received a report that (child) was harmed – can you tell me what happened? What harm has happened to any child in the care of these adults? What is the danger to this child if left in care of (mother/father)? What makes this situation more complicated? What worries (you/mom/dad) about being involved with child protection?	What’s working well here? What does (mum/dad) do well to care for (child)? What does (child) like best about (mom/dad)? When has (mom) fought off the depression and been able to focus on the child? When has (dad) protected the children from the effects of his drinking? When might the child have been hurt, but wasn’t? Have these parents been able to acknowledge harm to the child? Who helps (mom/dad) with the kids?	What does safety look like for this child? What would (child) say makes him/her feel safe/happy/loved all the time? What kind of home would (mum/dad) say she/he wants for her child? What do you need to see to be satisfied it is safe for the child to go home /close the case? Where would (youth) say she/he wants life to be like at 18? What does (grandma/friend/neighbor) think needs to happen for this child to be safe?	Who would have to do what to ensure this child’s safety from (name danger)? What would we have to see happening all the time that would tell everyone that the children are safe? What would convince everyone that it is safe for (child) to go home. What would need to be happening all the time to make it safe to close the case? What would (youth) have to be able to do to convince everyone he/she is ready for adult independence at 18?
A mplify Behavioral detail: what would you see?	When has the harm happened? How often? How bad? How did that incident affect the child? How long has this abuse been happening? Give me the first, worst and most recent examples of the abuse? How does (complicating factor) make building child safety more complicated? What worries (child)?	When have these good things happened? How often? How did the mum fight off the depression? How does the neighbor help? How else? How is (name support) making things better for the child? What did (mom/dad) do to make the visit really enjoyable for the kids? Who else helps? What else helps? What’s better since the report? [use solution focused ‘miracle’ question]	Describe a time when this child was safe. What is the child’s wish/dream? How many people do you think should be involved in this safety plan? What does everyone agree represents safety for this child? Is this goal written in a way the child will understand it? Would (name) agree this is the most important goal?	What else would you do to protect your child from (situation/danger)? What else? What else? What else? How many people need to be involved to ensure (safety action) happens all the time? What will you do when (trigger) happens? Who will you call upon when (danger) happens? Who will come, day or night, to help when (danger) happens? How do you know (safety action) is possible? What is (mom/dad’s) (willingness/capacity) to do this? Who will hold you to (safety action)?
R eflect Meaning	Has the incident changed how you think of yourself as a parent? How? What in the child’s condition/behavior indicates harm? What worries (you/mom/dad) most about your children? What else? Who else is worried about the children? How come? What else worries the children? Are the children affected differently? Which danger concerns you the most? How worried are you (scale worries)? Of all the complicating factors which do you think is most important to deal with?	What gets (mom/dad) engaged/excited? What’s better since the report? Which aspects of parenting/family life are you (mum /dad) most proud of? What would (friend, extended family, neighbor) say about these parents’ strengths? What does (child) want mum/dad to do more of? Who does (child) want more involved? How have the parents’ efforts to change benefitted the child? Which of the strengths are most useful in terms of getting this problem dealt with? What difference would it make to expand the family’s support system?	What would (child) have to see happening to believe he/she will be safe? What would (grandma/ friend/ community) have to see to believe the child is safe? What would increase the parent’s confidence in their ability to keep the child safe? Who will support the parents to achieve these goals? How would achieving this goal benefit this child? On a scale of 0 to 10 what is the parent’s willingness, confidence and capacity to achieve this goal? How realistic is it for (teenager) to achieve this goal by 18?	How will mental health/addictions treatment services for you make your child safe? How will (child) benefit from (name safety action)? What would (grandma/ friend/ community) say about this proposed action/plan? What would increase your confidence in your ability to carry out (safety action)? What would (grandma/ friend/ community) say would increase their confidence that (safety action) will happen all the time? On a scale of 0 to 10 how would (safety action) change your rating of this child’s safety? On a scale of 0 to 10 what is the parent’s willingness, confidence, and capacity to carry out the plan actions? How will we know these good things are happening all of the time?
S tart Over	Are there any other worries that we have missed? Are there any other barriers to building safety?	Are there any other good things happening in this family that we have missed?	Are there any other goals that we have missed in the plan? What else would build safety/wellbeing?	What else needs to happen to ensure this child’s safety? Are there any other important things that we have missed in the plan?

Adapted from Andrew Turnell’s E.A.R.S Tool for the Three Column Form