

# Exercise



## Circle of Safety

**AVERT**  
FAMILY VIOLENCE



**Collaborative Responses in  
the Family Law System**



An Australian Government Initiative

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## Contact us

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## Circle of Safety Exercise

### Purpose:

To ensure that participants identify what facilitates and interrupts a child's attachment and positive development.

### Materials required:

- Large circle drawn on paper or a masking tape circle on the floor
- Set of Circle of Safety Cards for each group
- Pens
- Butcher's paper

### Process:

1. Divide participants into small groups of 4-6 people
2. Using all the circle of safety cards, place all the things that they would expect to exist within a child's circle of safety
3. Identify what would be the impact of family violence on the contents of the circle of safety
4. Identify the attributes of the parent/caregiver that sustain, increase or maintain the circle of safety (for example Attentive to Child's needs)
5. Once damaged or broken, how could the circle of safety be re-established by:
  - The parent/caregiver?
  - The professional worker?
  - The actions of the court?



**Key elements to draw out of the discussion:**

- Who do children living with family violence turn to in times of crisis? It has been shown that typically children turn to adults they perceive to be strong, caring, live near their home or school and are people with whom the child has a safe and open relationship. The personal qualities children have identified in these adults include the person's ability to take control, end the immediate violence and ensure safety for the child and mother.
- Professionals in the family law system can occupy unique positions in the life of a child whose circle of safety has been disrupted by family violence. Establishing and re-establishing a circle of safety can assist children to think about and integrate their experiences, to build upon their own increasing capacities to function independently in the world.
- The legal processes that impact upon the child can be considered in the light of how they support or disrupt the circle of safety.



## Circle of Safety Cards

**Protection**

**Comfort**

**Nourished**

**Delight in the child**

**Watched over**

**Enabled to make choices**



**Helped**

**Available**

**Enjoyment**

**Welcoming**

**Approachable**

**Noticed**



**Loved**

**Held**

**Encouraged to express and  
make sense of feelings**

**Excluded**

**Disinterest**

**Inaccessible**



**Anxiety**

**Hurt**

**Neglected**

**Dismissive**

**Demeaning their parent**

**Controlling**