



## FLORIDA SAFETY DECISION MAKING METHODOLOGY

### Family Functioning Assessment - Ongoing

**Case Name:** Braun, Melanie      **FSFN Case ID:** 1001234567      **Date of Most Recent Safety Plan:**  
**Worker Name:** Reid, Spencer      **Approval Date:**

#### I. HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Child Name	Date of Birth	Primary Goal	Concurrent Goal	Current Placement
Sandler, James	11.03.2003	Maintain and Strengthen		Residing with parent/mother
Braun, Byron	01.24.2011	Maintain and Strengthen		Residing with parent/mother
Braun, Shane	11.16.2013	Maintain and Strengthen		Residing with parent/mother

#### Parent/ Legal Guardian(s)/ Other Adult Household Members in Caregiving Role:

Name	Date of Birth
Braun, Melanie	09.22.1976
Braun, Bruce	10.17.1983

#### Family Support Network

Name	Role
Block, Pam	Maternal Grandmother of James, Byron, and Shane
Beys, Leann	Paternal Grandmother of Byron and Shane
Sandler, Michael	Biological Father of James

#### II. MALTREATMENT AND NATURE OF MALTREATMENT

What is the extent of the maltreatment? What surrounding circumstances accompany the alleged maltreatment?

##### Extent of Maltreatment

Bruce and child James got into a verbal and physical altercation over homework and perceived disrespect by James to Bruce. Bruce grabbed the child by the throat and slammed him against the seat of the chair and computer table. Bruce told James that he had 30 minutes to complete his homework and James began to mouth off with a disrespectful attitude, yelling at Bruce, "Ok ok ok! I'm trying!" Bruce went toward James and began yelling at him saying he was tired of James being disrespectful. Bruce's anger continued and he hit James on the top of the head, across the face and punched him in the forehead. After continued back and forth between Bruce and James, Bruce told James to go to his room, and James refused. Bruce tried to physically remove and carry James from the kitchen table to James' bedroom and James went limp. James began to hit Bruce. Bruce grabbed James' wrist to restrain him and the mother Melanie jumped on Bruce's back. Bruce pushed Melanie against the glass doors in the kitchen and slapped her across the face several



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times. The mother told James to go upstairs and James went upstairs. Bruce threw several kitchen chairs out of his way and went upstairs to continue his discussion with James. He grabbed James by the shoulders to put James physically in his bed and James again went limp at which time Bruce slapped James' legs and told James to "stay put" and that he will get a "0" on his homework because he would not allow him to continue with homework. The mother again tried to intervene and get Bruce out of the room and Bruce pushed Melanie out of the way on his way out. Bruce left the room, went outside to cool off and smoke a cigarette. Melanie told her 3 year old Byron to lock the door. During the physical altercation, the mother intervened by jumping on the Bruce's back to keep him from hurting James. James sustained minor scratches on his arm and throat. Melanie sustained a broken pinky finger. There are 2 other children in the home, Byron and Shane, who witnessed the incident and were fearful of Bruce's behavior. Byron was yelling at his father to "stop hurting Bubba". Byron and Shane were both crying hysterically during the incident.

#### **Surrounding Circumstances**

On 01/09/14, the stepfather Bruce had been drinking since 12:00 and returned home at approximately 8:00pm, intoxicated. Upon arriving, Melanie told Bruce that James was still working on his homework and had been sitting at the table for 2 hours because he refused to complete his writing assignment. The mother and Bruce engaged in a conversation about James' grades. Bruce became upset and went to discipline James. Once Bruce was locked out of the house Melanie contacted Bruce's mother, Leann Beys, to come to the home to pick Bruce up. She also contacted her mother, Pam Block, who contacted the police and responded to the home. Bruce left the home and has been residing with his mother since the incident.

Law enforcement reported that the Bruce had been drinking earlier but did not appear to be intoxicated, was not slurring, stumbling, or incoherent. Melanie asserted that Bruce came home from a bar and was intoxicated. Upon CPI interviews, the Bruce could not remember details of the evening or exactly what he informed LE, but his account was similar to Melanie's and James'. James and Bruce have a difficult relationship.

Maltreatment Findings: Verified for physical injury re: James with Bruce Braun as caregiver responsible; Verified for substance misuse-alcohol re: James, Byron and Shane with Bruce Braun as the caregiver responsible; Verified family violence threatens child re: James, Byron and Shane with Bruce Braun as caregiver responsible.

The family has two prior investigations, one in 2009 and one in 2012. In 2009, the investigation alleged Inadequate Supervision of James (Age 6) as he was reported to play outside without supervision. At this time, Bruce was not a participant in this family. The investigation included James, Melanie and the maternal grandmother, Pam Block. After interviewing the household members, neighbors, and relative collaterals, the information gathered indicated that James was always appropriately supervised while playing outside,



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either by the mother, grandmother, or a neighbor who often provided support to the family.

Then in 2012, a report was received that included Melanie, Bruce, James (Age 8) and Byron (Age 1). This report had similar reported concerns as the current investigation including physical abuse and substance abuse by Bruce. Additionally, the prior reflected challenges for Melanie and Bruce's ability to effectively manage James's behavior. During the reported incident Bruce, while frustrated, struck James across the cheek with an open hand. Bruce acknowledged a prior arrest associated with alcohol in 2007 and was reported to be drinking alcohol during this incident however, the final assessment did not include alcohol as a contributing factor and indicated that Bruce was a social drinker. Additionally, all interviewed agreed that James demonstrates disrespectful behavior, specifically toward Melanie and Bruce. However, it was learned that he also demonstrates the behavior outside of the home (maternal grandmother had to send him home after visiting due to behavior). The investigation was closed with No Indicators of Substance Misuse – Alcohol and Not Substantiated for Physical Injury and the family was referred to preventative services to address parenting skills of how to understand and parent a child with ADHD and difficult behaviors.

#### **Analysis:**

Based on the prior history and the information gathered via observations and interviews, Bruce's excessive consumption of alcohol, demeaning behavior and physical altercations are a contributing factor to the negative conditions in the home.

#### **Observations and Interviews**

Information was obtained from the following interviews and sources: Child, James Sandler, age 10; James' mother, Melanie Braun; James' stepfather Bruce Braun; MGM Pam Block, PGM Leann Beys, Michael Sandler, James' biological father; friend of parents, Ed Barth, James' teacher Mr. Madison, James' counselor, DCF Prior history.

#### **Additional Ongoing Information**

No additional information ascertained regarding maltreatment and circumstances surrounding the maltreatment.



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#### III. CHILD FUNCTIONING

How does the child function on a daily basis? Include physical health, development; emotion and temperament; intellectual functioning; behavior; ability to communicate; self-control; educational performance; peer relations; behaviors that seem to provoke parent/caregiver reaction/behavior; activities with family and others. Include a description of each child's vulnerability based on threats identified.

#### **SANDLER, JAMES**

James, 10, presents as an articulate boy who is described by others as a smart kid with behaviors that can be challenging and disrespectful. He does well academically even though his stepfather and mother believe that he should be doing better and doesn't apply himself. James' favorite subject is math and he doesn't like writing. He has a lot of homework. He is currently on a 504 plan and has a scheduled meeting for an IEP. For fun he likes to ride his bike and play video games.

James is diagnosed with ADHD and takes Concerta in the morning and a Ritalin booster at school during lunchtime. His mother takes him to see a child psychiatrist to manage the ADHD. Before the medication James had difficulty staying on task at school and would randomly get up from his seat and walk around and just "be all over the place". Since the medication James has been able to stay on task at school. James' medication is said to 'wear off' by the time he returns home from school which affects his ability to focus. On certain days, it doesn't take James anytime to complete his homework assignments and at other times they are up past 10:00pm finishing because James lacks focus or is obstinate and refuses to participate. James does not take medication on the weekends and it is unclear as to whether this is recommended by his treatment professional or not. James has severe asthma and uses a nebulizer and Xopenex.

According to his mother and step-father when James is not behaving he can be disrespectful, argumentative, rude, and lazy. He often has difficulty complying with instructions from them and he often yells at his step-father and mother. This has led to a lot of conflict in the home. When James' meets his mother and step-father's expectations things are calmer between them. James and his step-father participate in activities together including Boy Scouts, playing ball, and going to the movies.

James is aware of his father's mental health issues and rarely sees or speaks with him. James doesn't like when his step-father drinks because he gets mean. He acknowledges that this makes him angry and leads to fighting between his step-father and him which his mother sometimes gets involved in.



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#### **Analysis:**

When James' medication for his ADHD 'wear off' after he returns home or when he is not given his ADHD medications on the weekends this contributes to his negative behaviors leading to additional conflict in the home. James has some insight about the effect of his stepfather's drinking on his behavior, and also how it makes him angry and leads to fights.

#### **Observations and Interviews:**

Information was obtained from the following interviews and sources: Child, James Sandler, age 10; James' mother, Melanie Braun; James' stepfather Bruce Braun; MGM Pam Block, PGM Leann Beys, Michael Sandler, James' teacher Mr. Madison, James' counselor, DCF Prior history

#### **BRAUN, BYRON**

Byron is 3 years old and demonstrates age consistent stranger anxiety. He is prone to staying close to his mother during home-visits. He is described as very independent, he likes to go to the bathroom by himself and wipe himself; he doesn't like for others to come and check on him while he is in the bathroom. He likes to dress himself. He is able to kick a large ball. He recognizes familiar things. He can and prefers to feed himself. He knows the names of things and people. Byron plays well with others and is able to speak clearly. According to Melanie, Byron has started emulating his older brother, James's behavior, and has been having increased tantrums. Byron was observed yelling at his mother when she asked him to do something and he began to tantrum. Melanie is concerned about this behavior and believes Byron is beginning to talk back, yell, and tantrum "just like James".

#### **Analysis:**

Byron presents as bright child, fully engaged in exploring his environment. He demonstrated gross and fine motor and appeared within normal limits regarding his cognitive development. Recently he has begun to exhibit an increase in negative behaviors, including tantrums, yelling, and screaming which has been difficult for Melanie to handle.

#### **Observations and Interviews:**

Information was obtained from the following interviews and sources: Child, James Sandler, age 10; James' mother, Melanie Braun; James' stepfather Bruce Braun; MGM Pam Block, PGM Leann Beys.

#### **BRAUN, SHANE**

Shane is 2 months old. The child appears to be within normal limits for height and weight. By report, he has doubled in weight since birth. He was observed cooing, he smiles for his mother when she feeding him. He was observed kicking his feet and moving his hands while feeding. He would look at his parents' faces while they talked to him. He is breastfed and supplementing with a bottle of breastmilk.



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#### **Analysis:**

Shane presents as developmentally within normal limits for physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development. He appears bonded to both parents.

#### **Observations and Interviews:**

Information was obtained from the following interviews and sources: Child, James Sandler, age 10; James' mother, Melanie Braun; James' stepfather Bruce Braun; MGM Pam Block, PGM Leann Beys.

#### **IV. ADULT FUNCTIONING**

How does the adult function on a daily basis? Overall life management. Include assessment and analysis of prior child abuse/neglect history, criminal behavior, impulse control, substance use/abuse, violence and domestic violence, mental health; include an assessment of the adult's physical health, emotion and temperament, cognitive ability; intellectual functioning; behavior; ability to communicate; self-control; education; peer and family relations, employment, etc.

#### **BRAUN, MELANIE**

Melanie is 39 years old. She has two children with her current husband, and James from a previous marriage to Michael Sandler. Melanie and Michael divorced due to Michael's severe depression. Melanie has a few close friends from work that she relies on and confides in. Her mother, Pam, is a very strong support system for her as well.

Melanie is happy in her relationship with Bruce though is not happy about the increase in conflict and fighting between them regarding James's behavior. She often feels caught in the middle between James and Bruce. She does sometimes wish Bruce would drink less, but does not want to discuss this with Bruce as she is concerned this will lead to more conflict between them. Since the safety plan was put in place Melanie is finding Bruce's absence difficult and a stressor in terms of caring for the three children by herself.

Melanie is employed as an assistant manager at Publix where she has worked for the last two years, and has a steady employment history. She has a history of post-partum depression but denies current symptoms. Melanie noted that she finds herself sad at times now but denies depression, suicidal or homicidal thoughts. Melanie copes with stress by crying. She said that sometimes she cries a lot but not in front of the children. Melanie's parents divorced when she was four years old.

Melanie has experienced adverse childhood trauma as a result of being in a caregiver role early and often due to her mother's unmanaged mental health when she was growing up. She was very aware of her actions as a child and she tried hard to behave like the "perfect child" to avoid upsetting her mother. Melanie's relationship with her mother has improved



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greatly now that her mother is stable on medications. Melanie's father left the family when she was young, but maintained inconsistent contact with her until she was 16. After that she lost track of him until four years ago when she found him on Facebook. Her father, who suffered from alcoholism, died recently and she has been experiencing sadness, but is not despondent.

#### **Analysis:**

Melanie appears conflicted between her relationship with her son and her relationship with her husband and has a difficult time managing both relationships and helping them to work past their disagreements. Melanie is very concerned with others' feelings. Given her non-confrontational personality, she enables and justifies much of Bruce's binge drinking and volatile behavior as well as James and Byron's negative attention seeking behavior and tantrums. She has a tendency to avoid confrontation with Bruce, James and Byron.

#### **Observations and Interviews:**

Information was obtained from the following interviews and sources: Melanie Braun; James' stepfather Bruce Braun; MGM Pam Block, PGM Leann Beys

#### **BRAUN, BRUCE**

Bruce is thirty years old and employed full time. He is currently employed at Florida City Concrete where he is a foreman and has been there for three years. He is a hard worker and holds himself and others to high expectations. He becomes frustrated when those others do not meet his expectations causing him to sometimes lash out verbally. Bruce denied ever having any alcohol related problems at work, however his mother reports that he was fired from the Department of Treasury for showing up to work smelling like alcohol.

Bruce is typically a quiet and reserved personality. Bruce describes his alcohol intake as something he likes to do on occasion, but not something he has control over. He reports not drinking little during the week, but sometimes binge drinking on the weekend. He does not see this as an issue as he normally does not binge drink around the children. Bruce admits to drinking alcohol regularly as a teen and for years into adulthood.

Bruce admitted that he will sometimes screams, yells, and is impatient when he has been drinking. There have been times when he has thrown things like dishes or pushed things out of his way like tables or chairs, but he denied ever throwing things at his family or another person. He has blacked out after drinking, but this has not happened often. Bruce completed a substance abuse evaluation during the last DCF investigation. The evaluator, based on Bruce's self-report, did not have any treatment recommendations.

Bruce is happy in his marriage although they have been having more disagreements and arguments, mostly around James and how to manage his attitude and behavior. He handles personal stress by trying to get rid of it. He believes in having a plan of action. He



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leaves his work stress at work; he tries not to bring it home. He is quiet when he is stressed out and he will keep to himself. He usually tries to remove himself from escalating situations with James. Bruce describes himself as a fun person, easy to get along with, with high expectations.

### **Analysis:**

Bruce is typically a quiet and reserved personality, but Bruce's personality can become hostile, volatile, and aggressive changes after consuming alcohol. Bruce's alcohol consumption has become a problem, creating behavior and personality changes and posing a danger threat to his children.

**Observations and Interviews:** Information was obtained from the following interviews and sources: Melanie Braun; Bruce Braun; MGM Pam Block, PGM Leann Beys

## **V. PARENTING**

General – What are the overall, typical, parenting practices used by the parents/legal guardians? Discipline/Behavior Management – What are the disciplinary approaches used by the parents/legal guardians, and under what circumstances?

### **BRAUN, MELANIE**

Melanie does not agree with spanking, but believes sometimes the only way to get across to James is to spank him. She does not spank the other children, but both she and Bruce have spanked James. After the spankings, James behavior will temporarily improve, but he will return back to the same behavior a short time later. She stated that spanking is the exception to the rule. Generally, she tries to talk with James, will give him a consequence or remove a privilege. She said that after much arguing back and forth, James usually becomes apologetic for his behavior, but will return to the same behavior a short time later.

Melanie thinks it might look like James is a target child but given the age discrepancy of their kids, James is the only child in their family of an age where “attitude” and “talking back” behaviors are triggers for both Melanie and Bruce.

Bruce and collaterals described Melanie as an amazing mother, nurturing and involved. Bruce sees as her biggest fault that she doesn't teach James or Byron or hold them accountable for their behavior when they do something wrong or are deliberately hurtful or antagonistic with her or Bruce. He works and she stays home with the children so he expects her to be able to control things and she doesn't know how to. Melanie describes herself as a “people pleaser” and does not want to look like the villain in the eyes of her children. She engages in arguments with them, persuading them, trying to get them not to be mad at her. She sometimes gives in so she they won't be mad at her. When Bruce is home Melanie will often depend on him to enforce discipline with the boys.





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Melanie recognized that James was having trouble focusing in school and took him to see a child psychiatrist. After James was diagnosed with ADHD Melanie has ensured James takes his medication on school days. Melanie was not able to identify how James's diagnosis with ADHD may be affecting his behavior at home, but is open to discussing this with the psychiatrist. Since James' father is diagnosed with bi-polar disorder she wants to stay on top of James' mental health.

Melanie found the parenting classes offered during the prior DCF investigation helpful, but could not state how she changed her parenting behaviors after the classes. During that intervention the parenting evaluator stated Melanie had unrealistic expectations as to what should motivate her son to please his parents. Efforts were made by the provider to help parents learn the value of positive reinforcement for desired behaviors, but details are not clear as to how much progress was made.

#### **Analysis:**

Melanie understands the basics of raising a child with ADHD, but only manages James' diagnosis and treatment during the weekdays for school and has no insight about how his diagnosis may affect his interactions at home. Melanie appears to be parent who avoids confrontation and makes decisions often based on emotion. She is uncomfortable with confrontation from disciplining her children and relinquishes discipline responsibility to others.

#### **Observations and Interviews:**

Information was obtained from the following interviews and sources: Child, James Sandler, age 10; James' mother, Melanie Braun; James' stepfather Bruce Braun; MGM Pam Block, PGM Leann Beys

#### **Braun, Bruce:**

Bruce has always wanted to be a father and considers this job the most important in the world. He sees himself as family oriented, and spends quality time with all three kids through daily activities and community groups including Boy Scouts.

Bruce described his and James' relationship day in and day out as "normal" – nothing really out of the ordinary. He only gets really frustrated when James gets mouthy and disrespectful. He does not think James is a bad kid but he believes that James lacks structure and accountability. He knows that James is diagnosed with ADHD, but believes this is a "big money maker" and kids just need parents to be firm. He does not believe it is good for children to be taking medications for ADHD. Bruce does not become frustrated or irritable with either Byron or Shane's behaviors. Melanie described him as patient and engaged in teaching Byron and caring for Shane.

Bruce is the main disciplinarian in the home. Melanie is usually ok with the discipline and



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often asks him to handle it. His philosophy on discipline is that sometimes spanking is necessary with James, but it is used as the exception, not the 'go to' approach to deal with James' behavior. He stated that there is no physical discipline necessary for the other kids given their ages. He said that generally they try to talk with James first, will give him a consequence or remove a privilege. He thinks that James is old enough to reason and should not be arguing or talking back. He believes James needs to be accountable for his behavior and that the consequences he or Melanie impose should be maintained, despite the hardship on the parents. Bruce does not believe that his consumption of alcohol has had any effect on the relationship with any of the children.

**Analysis:**

Bruce is a caring and engaged father, but does become frustrated and sometimes acts aggressively towards James when he does not behave. Bruce does not have insight or understanding on how James' diagnosis of ADHD may influence his behavior. Bruce does not acknowledge that his consumption of alcohol has had a negative impact on his relationship with the children.

**Observations and Interviews:**

Information was obtained from the following interviews and sources: Child, James Sandler, age 10; James' mother, Melanie Braun; James' stepfather Bruce Braun; MGM Pam Block, PGM Leann Beys.

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### VI. REASONS FOR ONGOING INVOLVEMENT

**Danger Statement (Develop in collaboration with the family)**



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#### **VII. FAMILY CHANGE STRATEGY**

**Family Goal:** Describe how the family will be functioning when all children are safe and the family is able to independently meet the needs of their children. (Developed in collaboration with the family.)

**Ideas:** Describe ideas parent/legal guardian, worker, child or other network members have for moving toward the Family Goal.



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**Potential Barriers:** Describe things that could get in the way of change from the family's perspective and/or the family team's perspective.



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#### VIII. CHILD NEED INDICATORS

Children	Child Needs									
	Emotional/ Trauma	Behavioral (e.g. risk taking behavior, runaway, etc)	Development	Education	Physical Health/ Disability	Family Relationships	Peer/ Adult Relationships	Cultural Identity	Substance Awareness	Life Skills Development
Sandler, James										
Braun, Byron										
Braun, Shane										

#### IX. PRIORITY NEEDS

	Rating	Parent Meeting Needs?
Sandler, James		
Sandler, James		
Sandler, James		

If the parent is meeting the need, describe their actions. If the parent needs support or assistance to meet the needs of the child, the need will be addressed in the Case Plan.



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#### X. PROTECTIVE CAPACITIES

Adults	Capacity Categories and Types																		
	Behavioral						Cognitive					Emotional							
	Controls Impulses	Takes Action	Sets aside own needs for child	Demonstrates adequate skills	Adaptive as a Parent/Legal Guardian	History of Protecting	Is self aware	Is intellectually able	Recognizes threats	Recognizes child's needs	Understands protective role	Plans and articulates plans for protection	Meets own emotional needs	Is resilient	Is tolerant	Is stable	Expresses love, empathy, sensitivity to the child	Is positively attached with child	Is aligned and supports the child
Braun, Melanie Sandler																			
Braun, Brian																			

#### XI. PRIORITY NEEDS

BRAUN, MELANIE SANDLER	Rating	Include in Case Plan?
Is self-aware		
Recognizes threats		
Meets own emotional needs		

BRAUN, BRUCE	Rating	Include in Case Plan?
Controls impulses		
Recognizes threats		
Recognizes child's needs		
Sets aside own needs for child		
Is self-aware		

If a diminished protective capacity will not be addressed in the Case Plan, describe the assessment process to reach this conclusion.



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#### **XII. MOTIVATION FOR CHANGE**

Adult	Motivation
Braun, Melanie Sandler	
Braun, Bruce	

#### **XIII. IN-HOME SAFETY ANALYSIS AND PLANNING (removal home)**

	Yes No
The Parent/Legal Guardians are willing for an in-home safety plan to be developed and implemented and have demonstrated that they will cooperate with all identified safety service providers.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
The home environment is calm and consistent enough for an in-home safety plan to be implemented and for safety service providers to be in the home safely.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Safety services are available at a sufficient level and to the degree necessary in order to manage the way in which impending danger is manifested in the home.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
An in-home safety plan and the use of in-home safety services can sufficiently manage impending danger without the results of scheduled professional evaluations.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
The Parent/Legal Guardians have a physical location in which to implement an in-home safety plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

**In-Home Safety Plan is determined. Summarize the conditions that have changed since last safety analysis to support reunification with an In-Home Safety Plan.**



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#### XIV. CURRENT SAFETY PLAN ASSESSMENT FOR SUFFICIENCY

- Safety plan is sufficient, no need for changes to the plan at this time.
- Safety plan is not sufficient, not controlling for child safety or no longer applicable; change in safety plan is needed.
- Safety plan is no longer needed.

Based on the determination selected above, describe the assessment process to reach this conclusion.