



RELIAS | LEARNING



Relias Spotlight Series

November 2022

Hello Providers,

Welcome to the Optum Idaho **November Relias Spotlight Series** – a series devoted to offering you access to **free, accessible and continuing education unit-eligible** online education about topics that are important to behavioral health providers. In this month's Relias Spotlight Series, we are going to be answering the following questions around safety planning:

- What is a safety plan, and what should be included?
- When should providers use safety planning?
- Who should have a safety plan, and who should be a part of the safety plan?

What is a safety plan, and what should be included?

A safety plan is a collaborative process between the provider and member that creates an opportunity for the member to play an active part in identifying coping skills and sources of support to help keep themselves safe. The safety plan should be in the member's own words, easily accessible and reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to meet the member's needs. A copy of the safety plan should be kept in the member's file for the member and the provider to regularly review. The member should retain their safety plan in a format that can be easily accessible for them.

Members may find easily accessible options like taking a picture of the safety plan, so they have it on their phone, keeping a paper copy in their wallet or maybe placing a copy on their refrigerator serves as a reminder that they have a plan in place. Other members may find it helpful to keep the contact information for their support person, professional and community agencies they have listed within the safety plan stored in their phones for quick access in times of crisis. The key is to help the member identify ways they can access and use the safety plan as well as remove any barriers that may prevent them from using the plan.

There are many types of safety plan templates that providers can use with members. Although Optum Idaho does not require a particular template, some best practices to consider as part of the safety planning process include:

1. Helping the member identify warning signs and triggers that lead to a crisis. This may include people, places, thoughts, feelings, times of the year and behaviors that serve as red flags and can alert the member to use their safety plan to keep themselves safe.
2. Helping the member identify internal coping skills that they can use immediately without assistance from others when warning signs and triggers occur. This may include coping skills the member successfully used in the past to avoid a crisis and developing new coping skills to add to the members recovery toolbox.
3. Helping the member identify people or places that can distract them from the crisis, even if the distraction is temporary. This may include going to a person's "happy place," such as a lake and putting their feet in the sand or going to a coffee shop in their local neighborhood.
4. Helping the member identify family members, friends or coworkers whom they feel comfortable sharing they are in crisis and can provide positive support.
5. Helping the member identify professional and community agencies within their area the member can reach out to for help in times of crisis.
6. Helping the member identify the safety of their current environment and what steps, if any, they need to take to keep their environment safe.

When should providers use safety planning?

Safety planning should be done at the onset of treatment *and* at anytime during the course of treatment when risk behaviors have been identified. It is important for providers to also use the safety plan throughout the course of treatment by continuing to assess whether the safety plan is working, if there are any barriers for the member to follow through with the plan and discuss any changes the member was to make to better meet their needs.

Who should have a safety plan, and who should be a part of the safety plan?

When working with members who have a history of risk behaviors or are currently presenting with risk behaviors, providers must do their due diligence in assisting the member in developing a safety plan. Empowering members while creating a safety plan allows them to have a voice in what happens and by them choosing what skills, steps and supports they can utilize in times of crisis. The empowerment provides them with the opportunity to make positive steps and actions towards keeping themselves safe. The member should guide the safety planning process and include family or other supports that the member identifies.

There are safety plans for youth and adults that can be used before, during and after a crisis. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is a comprehensive source for information and resources around crisis and safety planning. As part of the Youth Empowerment Services (YES), the Department of Health and Welfare has developed a robust safety planning resource at www.yes.idaho.gov for providers working with youth.

If you would like more information and education around the topic of Safety Planning, we encourage you to log into [Relias](#) and search for the following modules:

WRAP One on One	REL-HHS-MEC-W1ON1
Engaging Family Members in Crisis Planning	REL-BHC-0-EFMCP
Approaches to Community-Based Suicide Prevention	REL-BHC-0-ACBSP
AIRS: Crisis Intervention within Information and Referral	REL-HHS-AIRS-CRISIS

Thank you again for the work that you do each day with our members so that Idaho can continue to improve access to behavioral health services. Optum Idaho is excited to offer these resources to you.

Sincerely,

The Optum Education and Training team