

# Enhancing safety for separating families affected by domestic and family violence:

## A scoping review of modifiable factors

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### What did we ask?

We looked at all existing research to discover what key factors are associated with enhanced safety for separating families affected by domestic and family violence (DFV).

### What did we find?

The key factors associated with enhanced safety for families affected by domestic and family violence (DFV), included:

**Geographic distance**, by creating and maintaining physical distance from the perpetrator, best supported by court orders;

**Protective use of technology**, such as accessing support and networks, and storing and recording evidence. Safety was also improved by detecting and avoiding surveillance, and abstaining from technology use;

**Relational support**, through tactics that promote proximity to allies and caring family members, and a sense of familiarity and predictability for children, particularly in new environments;

**Survivor-centred practitioners and services**, facilitated by **well-trained staff** who were responsive, validating, actively advocating, providing practical information as well as support and referrals. Other service-level factors included responsiveness to the unique needs of the family, long-term and flexible support, and support for stable housing;

**Court processes**, such as screening for DFV, providing alternatives to traditional litigation (e.g. shuttle and videoconferencing mediation),

**Court determinations** including mediation that resulted in full or partial agreement, supervised or suspended contact between children and the abusive parent, and inclusion of children's voices in court processes.

### Who might find this study relevant?

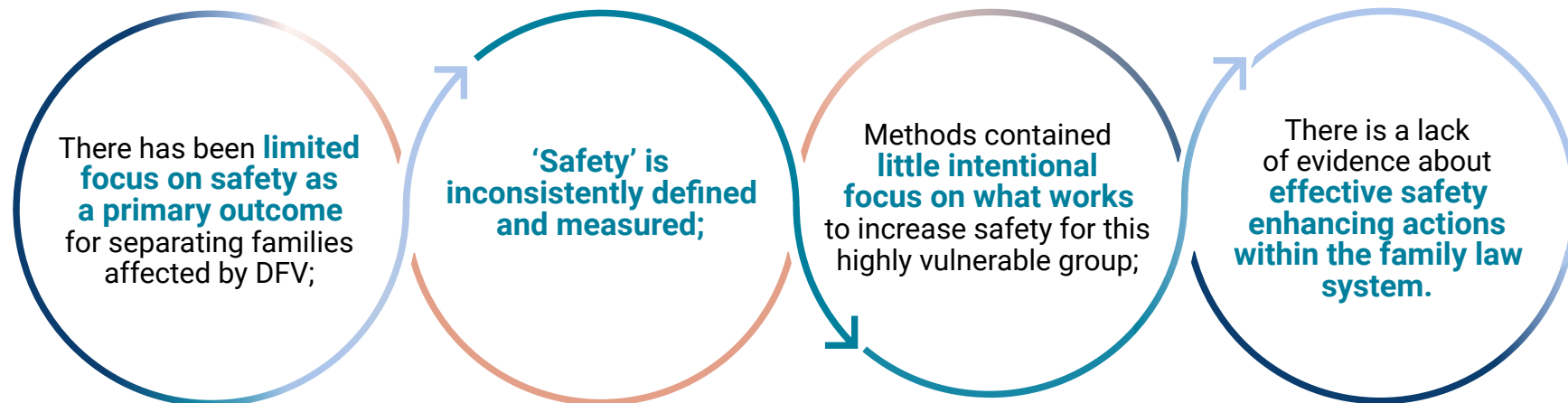


The findings from this study are highly valuable for **practitioners**, **policy-makers**, and **researchers**, working in family separation and domestic violence prevention fields.

We found that **caregivers play an active role** in creating and navigating safety for themselves and their children. Self-directed safety occurred in the context of systemic barriers to support and service limitations.

## What else did the research show?

When we looked at existing international research we also found:



## What does this mean?



**Early and accurate identification of DFV is a high priority in practice,** ensuring survivor-centred, collaborative safety responses while holding perpetrators accountable; this is best **supported by enhanced training** for practitioners engaging with survivors.



**Integrating survivor and child perspectives** in policy development and evaluation is key, with **targeted funding towards evidence-based, survivor-informed safety initiatives,** such as flexible funding, accessible housing, long-term support, and early risk screening.



**Longitudinal and intersectional research methods are needed** in the family law context to examine and measure safety in ways that reflect survivor experiences, track demographic nuances, and assess long-term outcomes.

