

The BASE Approach – Balancing, Active, Strategic, Empathetic – is a practical framework designed to help child support professionals make access to services safer and more responsive, especially for families affected by domestic violence. It supports professionals in navigating complex family dynamics while prioritizing safety, fairness, and child well-being.

Balancing safety, accountability, and access

- Weighing child support actions against potential safety risks
- Balancing neutrality with safety-centered decision-making
- Considering both parents' circumstances without minimizing harm
- Avoiding rigid, one-size-fits-all responses

Active listening, screening, and safety practices

- Actively screening for domestic violence and coercive control
- Actively listening without judgment
- Actively explaining rights, processes, and options
- Actively documenting safety concerns

Strategic use of tools, discretion, and partnerships

- Using enforcement tools in ways that do not compromise safety
- Timing actions thoughtfully
- Coordinating with domestic violence advocates, and community partners
- Tailoring an approach to a case based on individual risk factors

Empathetic without bias

- Recognizing defensive responses
- Separating the person from the behavior
- Maintaining firm, calm boundaries



Collusion	B.A.S.E. Approach	Confrontational
<p>Alliance forms – You take their side</p> <p>“I get it. Your partner really pushes your buttons. No wonder you reacted the way you did.”</p>	<p>Alliance with their positive traits and strengths</p> <p>“I respect that you want to share your perspective. We’ll go over expectations clearly so you can be successful with making all your child support payments.”</p>	<p>Oppositional – You’re adversaries</p> <p>“You’re just a violent person who doesn’t deserve to see your child.”</p>
<p>You join them in blaming others</p> <p>“I understand. It’s really your ex making things hard. The system is unfair to you.”</p>	<p>Point out how their actions affect others</p> <p>“It sounds like things have been difficult for you. At the same time, violence is not acceptable, and it impacts your child’s safety and stability.”</p>	<p>You openly judge and criticize their actions</p> <p>“I don’t care what you say. You’re nothing but a liar and an abuser.”</p>
<p>No accountability or consequences for their actions/behaviors – you feel sorry for them</p> <p>“You’ve had a rough life, so I can see why you lash out sometimes.”</p>	<p>Respectfully and clearly convey consequences of their actions</p> <p>“I hear your frustration, and I need to be clear: abusive behavior has serious consequences, both legally and for your child.”</p>	<p>You only focus on their harmful actions</p> <p>“I don’t want to hear your excuses. You’ll never change.”</p>
<p>You validate and affirm their side of the story</p> <p>“I’ll note that you were provoked and maybe the court will take that into consideration.”</p>	<p>Allow them to express their perspective and share their side of the story</p> <p>“I want to make sure you have a chance to explain your side, and I also need to be clear about what the law requires.”</p>	<p>You cut them off and won’t listen to their side of the story</p> <p>“I don’t want to hear your story. You should have paid on time, end of discussion.”</p>
<p>Result: Conflict is reduced between you and the abuser</p>	<p>Result: Conversations stay focused but may feel strained</p>	<p>Result: Conflict increases, and they get angry and disengage</p>

