



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 4: Assessment

Section 23: Initial Family Risk Assessment

Effective Date: December 1, 2023

Version: 8

- [Procedure](#)
- [Definitions](#)

- [Forms and Tools](#)
- [Related Policies](#)

- [Legal References](#)
- [Practice Guidance](#)

POLICY OVERVIEW

The Initial Family Risk Assessment is not to be used to arrive at a substantiation or unsubstantiation of the allegations of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N). Refer to policies 4.18 Initial Safety Assessment and 4.22 Making an Assessment Finding for guidance on substantiated or unsubstantiating CA/N allegations.

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) conducts an Initial Family Risk Assessment to assess the future probability of CA/N on all substantiated assessments. When risk is clearly defined and objectively quantified, DCS is able to identify and provide resources to families at higher risk of subsequent maltreatment.

[Back to Top](#)

PROCEDURE

The Initial Family Risk Assessment should be completed prior to the Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting but no later than 35 days from the date the Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (310) was received.

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Answer all questions on the Initial Family Risk Assessment;

Note: In addition to the Initial Family Risk Assessment, the FCM should reference the Family Functional Assessment (FFA) Field Guide when working with self-identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, + (LGBTQIA+) youth.

2. Determine the overall risk level based on the highest of either the abuse score or the neglect score; and

Note: There are separate scales on the Initial Family Risk Assessment to assess the future probability of abuse and neglect. Both scales are completed regardless of the type of allegation or substantiated type of maltreatment, and every effort should be made to answer every question. If the FCM is unable to obtain the information to answer a particular question, that question should be scored as "0".

3. Discuss the results of the Initial Family Risk Assessment with the CFT to develop a plan to assist in the identification and utilization of the family's strengths and informal supports to address needs (see policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings).

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Review and discuss the details of the assessment during regular case staffing;
2. Review the Initial Family Risk Assessment and decision; and
3. Guide the FCM in assisting the family and CFT to develop a plan to address the family's needs.

[Back to Top](#)

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Case Staffing

Case staffing is a systematic and frequent review of all case information with safety, stability, permanency, and well-being as driving forces for case activities.

Forms and Tools

- Initial Family Risk Assessment – available in the case management system
- Family Functional Assessment (FFA) Field Guide – available on the [Indiana Practice Model SharePoint](#)
- Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (SF 114) (310) – available in the case management system

Related Policies

- [4.18 Initial Safety Assessment](#)
- [4.22 Making an Assessment Finding](#)
- [5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings](#)

[Back to Top](#)

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-9-2-123 "Substantiated"](#)

[Back to Top](#)

PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 4.23

Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.

Determining Overall Risk Level

The scores for the abuse scale and the neglect scale are total separately. The higher of the two (2) scores is used to determine the risk level as indicated in the chart below:

Neglect Score	Abuse Score	Risk Level*
-1 - 1	-1 - 0	LOW
2 – 5	1 - 3	MODERATE
6 - 8	4 - 6	HIGH
9+	7+	VERY HIGH

*When unresolved safety threats are present at the end of the assessment, a case should be opened regardless of risk level.

Risk Levels

The Initial Family Risk Assessment identifies families with low, moderate, high, or very high probabilities of future CA/N. By completing the Initial Family Risk Assessment, the FCM obtains an objective appraisal of the likelihood that a family will maltreat their child in the next 18 to 24 months. The difference between risk levels is substantial. Families with high risk have significantly higher rates of subsequent allegations and substantiations than families with low risk, and they are more often involved in serious CA/N incidents.

Safety Assessment vs. Risk Assessment

It is important to keep in mind the different between safety and risk when completing the Initial Family Risk Assessment. The Safety Assessment assesses the child's present danger and the interventions currently needed to protect the child. In contrast, the Risk Assessment looks at the likelihood of future maltreatment.

[Back to Top](#)