

## Enhancement Title: Assess and Respond to Risk (Risk Assessment- Investigations)

July 7, 2014

**Explanation:** The actuarial risk assessment tool is now available in FSFN for completion by all investigators prior to closure of all Safety Methodology in-home investigations created on or after June 22, 2014.

**Benefit:**

- The actuarial risk assessment is based on research as to which family characteristics have a demonstrated correlation with future abuse and neglect.
- Children determined to be living in “high” or “very high” risk households will benefit the most from affirmative outreach and intervention.

**Who is impacted:**

- Child Protective Investigators (CPI)

**Policy / Decision surrounding practice:**

1. The risk assessment will be completed by the CPI on all families that have been assessed using the Family Functioning Assessment (FFA)-Investigations.
2. When a child spends time residing in two households (i.e., parents divorced or separated) the CPI assesses the household of the alleged perpetrator. If there are allegations on each household, complete a risk assessment on both.
3. The CPI will know the risk assessment items and complete definitions, and throughout the investigation will make sure that details needed to complete the risk assessment are collected and appropriately documented.
4. The risk assessment is completed based on conditions that exist at the time the incident is reported and investigated as well as the prior history of the family.
5. The CPI should complete the risk assessment after sufficient information has been collected for the safety determination and maltreatment findings have been determined. The CPI answers all items on the neglect and abuse indices regardless of the type of maltreatment alleged. When answering each item it is essential to use the risk tool definitions. Abbreviated definitions are in FSFN for each item, displayed by hovering over the item. If more detail of the definition is available, the hover definition refers the CPI to the online help system which contains more detailed information.
6. After answering all items in the tool, FSFN calculates the neglect score and classification of the risk of future neglect. FSFN also calculates the abuse score and classifies the risk of future abuse. The level assigned to each score is based on research. With each increase in risk level, the likelihood of future abuse or neglect increases substantially. Whichever is the highest classification (abuse or neglect) is considered the scored risk level.
7. There are four specific maltreatment conditions which result in a policy override equating to “Very High” risk if the scored risk level is low, moderate or high. These policy override conditions are:
  - a. Sexual abuse investigation and the perpetrator is likely to have access to the child.
  - b. Non-accidental injury to a child younger than two years old.
  - c. Severe non-accidental injury.
  - d. Caregiver action or inaction resulted in death of a child due to abuse or neglect (previous or current).
8. If policy override reasons are not present, the CPI may choose to apply a discretionary override to increase the risk level by one. The CPI would do this if in his/her professional judgment a unique family condition leads to a higher likelihood of abuse or neglect than the scored risk level indicates. Use of an override requires supervisory approval.

9. After considering overrides, the resulting risk level becomes the family's final risk level. This risk level will inform risk-based decisions related to the investigation.
10. Different actions will be taken depending on the safety and family risk level.
  - a. Unsafe children, regardless of the family risk level will be transferred to on-going services for case management to be provided by a certified case manager.
  - b. Safe children with a family risk level of high or very high will be offered family support services through the CBC or its designated provider.
  - c. Safe Children with a family risk level of moderate or low may be offered community referrals if needed.
11. The CPI will explain the risk assessment process and results to any parent assessed, including the following:
  - a. Explain how the risk level is based on research on other families who have been referred to the department for abuse and/or neglect and the likelihood of subsequent harm without intervention. An actuarial risk assessment does not predict which children will be maltreated per se, but simply the likelihood of maltreatment for all household classified as having the same or very similar characteristics as the home just scored. The risk level is not about blame for conditions in the household but represents an opportunity for change without formal intervention. Help the family understand that by working together to make some changes now, there is a good chance they can reduce their risk and avoid subsequent harm. High and very high risk families can reduce the likelihood of future harm by participating in interventions.
  - b. If the child is safe from impending danger, but risk is high or very high, explain the voluntary nature of family support services, or prevention and community support programs to reinforce the message that the parent wants what is best for his or her family and empower the parent to make an informed decision based on providing the parent with information on what community programs have to offer.
  - c. Explain to the parents how family support services are designed to increase specific protective factors to help the family prevent future maltreatment. It is important to be able to give the parent concrete examples of how engaging in an identified program can specifically help their children and family and reduce risk (i.e., enable families to use other resources and opportunities available in the community, etc.).
12. Supervisor consultation will be provided when there is a Safe Child with High/Very High Risk Level in order to:
  - a. Determine if information contained in the FFA is sufficient to identify impending danger or validate the original safety determination.
  - b. Consider the most effective family engagement strategy to discuss the risk of subsequent harm with the family.
  - c. Conduct a 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier Consultation to affirm the course of action.

**On-line Training:** Training for these changes is posted on the Center for Child Welfare's website: "Introduction to Actuarial Risk Assessment"  
<http://centervideo.forest.usf.edu/fsfn/actuarialriskassessment/actuarialriskassessment.html>

**Resources:** "How Do I Guides" for Risk Assessment is posted on the Center for Child Welfare's FSFN website:  
<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/FSFN/FSFNAll.shtml#UserGuides>

**CONTACT INFO:** If the new functionality is not working as it should, contact the DCF Help Desk at (850) 487-9400 or [dcf\\_helpdesk@dcf.state.fl.us](mailto:dcf_helpdesk@dcf.state.fl.us). Policy questions and other requests for assistance may be sent to the following email address: [Safety\\_Methodology@dcf.state.fl.us](mailto:Safety_Methodology@dcf.state.fl.us)

