



## 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 Establishing Initial Child Safety 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;
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 [CFT] 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 and risk, stability, permanency, and well-being as driving forces for case activities.

#### Risk

Risk is the likelihood that a child may experience abuse and/or neglect based on vulnerabilities and exposure to harm (see Risk and Safety Visual Aid).

#### Safety

Safety is protection from immediate harm due to caregiver's abilities to address all known threats (see Risk and Safety Visual Aid).

### Forms and Tools

- Initial Family Risk Assessment - available in the case management system
- Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (SF 114) (310) - available in the case management system
- [Risk and Safety Visual Aid](#)

### Related Policies

- [4.18 Establishing Initial Child Safety](#)
- [4.22 Making an Assessment Finding](#)
- [5.07 Child and Family Team \(CFT\) 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 During Initial Family Risk Assessment**

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:

<b>Neglect Score</b>	<b>Abuse Score</b>	<b>Risk Level*</b>
-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 versus 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](#)