

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 4: Assessment	Effective Date: March 1, 2019
	Section 23: Initial Family Risk Assessment	Version: 7

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will conduct an Initial Family Risk Assessment to assess the future probability of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) on all substantiated assessments.

The Initial Family Risk Assessment will not be used to arrive at a substantiation or unsubstantiation of the allegations of CA/N. See policies [4.18 Initial Safety Assessment](#) and [4.22 Making an Assessment Finding](#) for further guidance.

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 \(SF114\) \(310\)](#) was received. DCS will discuss the results of the Initial Family Risk Assessment with the CFT to assist in developing a plan to reduce the risk level by thoroughly identifying and considering the family’s strengths, needs, and informal supports.

Code References

[IC 31-9-2-123 “Substantiated”](#)

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will complete the following after arriving at an assessment finding of “substantiated”:

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
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.

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, which addresses the family’s needs.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Initial Family Risk Assessment

The Initial Family Risk Assessment is an assessment tool used by the FCM to assess the probability of both abuse and neglect. 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. Risk Assessment questions that may be helpful in determining the risk factors for LGBTQIA+ youth are available in the FFA Field Guide.

Completing the Initial Family Risk Assessment

Both scales of the Initial Family Risk Assessment, abuse and neglect, are completed regardless of the type of allegation or substantiated type of maltreatment. The FCM must make every effort during the assessment to obtain the information needed to answer every question. However, if the FCM is unable to obtain the information to answer a particular question, that question should be scored as “0.”

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 worker 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.

Determining Overall Risk Level

The scores for the abuse scale and the neglect scale are totaled 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.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. Initial Family Risk Assessment - available in the case management system
2. [Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect \(SF114\) \(310\)](#) – available in the case management system
3. Family Functional Assessment (FFA) Field Guide- available on the [Indiana Practice Model SharePoint](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

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.

Purpose of the Initial Family Risk Assessment

The purpose of the Initial Family Risk Assessment is to assess the probability of CA/N. When risk is clearly defined and objectively quantified, the choice between serving one (1) family or

another is simplified. DCS resources are targeted to families with higher risk because of the greater potential to reduce subsequent maltreatment.

The Initial Family Risk Assessment is based on research of cases with substantiated CA/N. The researchers examined the relationships between family characteristics and the outcomes of subsequent substantiated CA/N. The tool does not predict recurrence but simply assesses whether a family is more or less likely to have a future incident without intervention.

Safety vs. Risk Assessment

It is important to keep in mind the difference 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.

Risk of Abuse vs. Risk of Neglect

Different family dynamics are present in abuse situations than in neglect situations. Therefore, separate scales are used on the Initial Family Risk Assessment to assess the future probability of abuse and neglect.

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