

## REVISED

### RISK/SEVERITY ASSESSMENT FORM (INSTRUCTIONS)

NOTE: INTAKE/Child Protective Services ONLY – Brief description of circumstances which recently brought a case to our attention.

- I. OVERALL SEVERITY AND RATIONALE – Overall severity is an assessment of the seriousness of the current or most recent abuse or neglect. Factors #2 and #4 are the only factors to be considered when determining this rating. The summary must include a statement about what the overall severity rating is, along with your rationale for making that determination. The descriptors of the various levels of risk on the Risk/Severity Continuum under Factors #2 and #4 should assist writing the rationale.
- II. OVERALL RISK AND RATIONALE (Evidence to support moderate and high ratings) – Overall risk is a prediction of future abuse or neglect without agency intervention. The highest rated factor for #'s 1 and 3 are the starting point for overall risk. They represent the history of abuse or neglect coupled with the vulnerable state of the children. Overall risk may be raised based on the number of moderate to high ratings or lowered if considerable strengths exist. Special consideration should be given to factors of: 1) high intensity, i.e. feeling blue vs. clinically depressed or 2) long duration, i.e. one DUI vs. a 15-year drug addiction, or 3) environmentally supported, i.e. a physically abusive parent who attends a church that advocates corporal punishment. Dangerous combinations of risk factors must be taken into consideration also such as a passive mother, a domineering paramour, and a child with behavior problems. The summary must include a statement about what the Overall Risk is and why.
- III. INTERPRETION OF FACTORS RATED X (“unable to assess” ratings) – Factors rated X will always be your highest risk factor in the far-right column of the matrix. The summary must address any factors rated X and the significance of the missing information. For example, an X rating for Factor #4, “Extent of Emotional Harm,” for an infant may not impact risk because the child is too young to assess. However, an X rating for a parent in Factor #6, “cooperation,” may greatly impact risk if the parent lives in the home and refuses to talk to the worker.
- IV. FAMILY STRENGTH – Factors rated Z, “No Risk,” are normally considered strengths in the family. Strengths must be assessed to determine if they reduce risk. Review the descriptors in the Risk/Severity Continuum. The summary must include a discussion of strengths and whether they impact overall risk. For example, Factor #14, “Family Supports,” may be rated as a strength because there is a supportive relative who sees the child frequently.
- V. SAFETY ASSESSMENT AND PLAN – The primary goal of child welfare services is to protect children. Risk assessment is a tool to help determine whether a child is safe. The summary must include an assessment of whether the child is safe at their present location and the reasons why. The safety plan should include a discussion of where the child is located, why the child is safe, and any conditions or issues that relate to the safety of the child.

- VI. PRIORITIZATION OF PROBLEMS – Child abuse and neglect is usually a symptom of other underlying problems. Research conducted with abusive or neglectful families indicates that child abuse is the result of the interaction of a variety of factors rather than the presence or absence of any one factor. Risk assessment assists in helping to identify the major causes of abuse or neglect. Once identified, problems or needs must be prioritized so that a treatment plan can be developed that address the issues. The summary must identify and prioritize the major problems or needs in the family.
- VII. NEW DEVELOPMENTS/OTHER – Would include any new information that is not included in the sections above that may impact on the risk to the child(ren). This could include changes in household structure, medical coverage, or compliance with new welfare regulations: (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families TANF).

NOTE:

EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT MODERATE/HIGH RATINGS – Factors rated moderate or high tend to raise the risk of abuse or neglect in the family. Review the descriptors for the moderate to high levels on the Risk/Severity Continuum. The summary must contain a statement and some evidence or other justification why they are rated higher. An example may be rating Factor #12, “Family Violence,” higher because the police have been called to the home for domestic disputes.