

ESTABLISHING AND DOCUMENTING OVERALL SEVERITY AND OVERALL RISK

After the fifteen factors have been rated, it is necessary to analyze the information gathered to determine the overall level of severity and the overall level of risk with the family. This is not done by simply finding the highest rating on the matrix but by conducting a thoughtful analysis of the risk factors and determining how those factors may be interacting with each other.

HIGHEST RISK FACTOR SECTION

Review each of the ratings found in a risk factor. Select the highest risk rating found and enter that risk rating in the *highest risk factor section* for the factor being reviewed. An (X) rating should be considered higher than any other risk rating for the purposes of completing the Highest Risk Factor section.

DETERMINING OVERALL SEVERITY

Overall Severity represents the severity of the current abuse and neglect allegation(s). Review Factors #2 and 4, (Severity/Frequency and/or recentness of abuse/neglect, **and** Extent of Emotional Harm). If there are no (X) ratings, the highest rating found represents the **Overall Severity** rating. If any of the ratings in either of these two factors is an (X), the impact of the unknown information must be assessed to determine if the risk level should be raised as a result of the missing information. The risk level may stay the same or be raised to the next risk level but can never be lowered when factoring in the (X) for Overall Severity.

Overall Risk represents a logical, thoughtful analysis of the impact on risk made by the interactions of all the factors. After determining the overall severity rating, the further analysis of the remaining risk factors must be made. Factor 1 and 3 (Vulnerability and Prior Abuse/Neglect) should be reviewed closely. Overall risk is not based solely on these two factors, however moderate or high ratings for these factors may very well require that the overall risk level within the family be raised to the next risk level. These two factors represent the history of abuse or neglect coupled with the vulnerable state of the child(ren). All other factors should be closely reviewed to determine how they impact risk.

Additional things to consider include:

- ⇒ The impact of unknown information (factors rated X)
- ⇒ Factors, which when found together, (constellations or cluster) should be given added weight
- ⇒ Dangerous combinations should raise “red flags” when found
- ⇒ Strengths must be analyzed to determine whether they are strong enough to lower risk