



University of Pittsburgh | SCHOOL OF Social Work | Empower People Lead Organizations Grow Communities
PA Child Welfare Resource Center

Charting the Course towards Permanency for Children in Pennsylvania

Module 5:
Risk Assessment

Thursday, November 03, 2011

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Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to:
 - Recognize the importance of doing a thorough and accurate risk assessment to evaluate the future risk of harm.
 - Explain the importance of linking the results of the assessment of risk to case planning and service provision.

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Competencies

- 106-1: The child welfare professional knows the personal, interpersonal, family, and environmental factors which increase risk.
- 106-2: The child welfare professional knows investigation and interviewing strategies to assess and determine the degree of risk to a child.
- 106-3: The child welfare professional knows how to use the risk assessment tool.
- 106-4: The Child Welfare Professional is able to gather pertinent information and can make an initial assessment of risk and appropriate case disposition.
- 106-5: The child welfare professional understands the ways in which cultural variables can confound an assessment of child maltreatment, and can conduct investigation activities that are congruent with a family's cultural background.


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Agenda

- Introduction
- What Risk Assessment Can and Cannot Do
- The Need for Accurate Assessments of Risk
- Matrix and Continuum
- Understanding and Rating the Risk Factors
- Completing and Documenting an Assessment of Risk
- Case Transfer
- Wrap-Up



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Types of Assessments



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Goals of Risk Assessment

- To evaluate risk of future harm to a child.
- To assess risk to determine if maltreatment is likely to occur or recur in the future.
- To apply the identified risk factors to case planning.

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Goal of Risk Assessment, (cont'd)

- Three ways in which we hope to meet the goals include:
 - Thoroughly assessing risk through a comprehensive evaluation.
 - Documenting a decision regarding level of risk.
 - Supporting facilitation of the delivery of services by focusing resources and efforts on risk factors rated as moderate and high.

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What is Different About...

- Hearing about a forecasted thunderstorm, hearing thunder and seeing lightning in the distance, and standing outside in a thunderstorm?
- A four-year-old child:
 - being in a house in which caregivers keep matches in a kitchen drawer;
 - who has matches in his dresser drawer; and
 - seen attempting to light a match
- A house with:
 - a six-year-old without heat in the summertime;
 - a thirteen-year-old without heat in the wintertime; and
 - an infant without heat in the wintertime

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Risk vs. Safety

Risk	Safety
Considers likelihood of future maltreatment	Considers current dangerous family conditions
Considers family functioning	Considers severe forms of dangerous conditions and maltreatment
Looks at child well-being	Looks at family conditions that meet the safety threshold
Has an unlimited timeframe	Considers present to immediate (near-future) timeframe
Judgment surrounds negative effects of future maltreatment	Judgment surrounds the certainty of present/immediate severe effects
Family situations and behaviors progress to seriously-troubled	Family situations and behaviors are currently out of control
Family situations may be treated over time	Family situations and behavior must be immediately controlled/managed
All aspects of the family life are relevant to future maltreatment	A limited number of safety threats are relevant to immediate severe neglect and abuse issues


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A Safety Plan Intervention Must...

- Control or manage present and/or impending danger;
- Have an immediate effect;
- Be immediately accessible and available;
- Contain safety services and actions only; and
- Not contain promissory commitments.




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Pennsylvania Risk Assessment Intervals

- Screening
- Conclusions of Intake
- 6 month intervals
- Return Home
- Agency/Supervisor Discretion
- Case Closure



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Video & Group Exercise

- **Group 1 (Mary):**
 - Strengths related to Mary
 - Safety Threats related to Mary
 - Risk Factors related to Mary
- **Group 2 (Darren):**
 - Strengths related to Darren
 - Safety Threats related to Darren
 - Risk Factors related to Darren
- **Group 3 (Eli):**
 - Strengths related to Eli
 - Risk Factors related to Eli
- **Group 4 (Environment):**
 - Strengths related to the environment
 - Risk Factors related to the environment

Create three flipchart papers respectively titled *Strengths*, *Safety Threats*, and *Risk Factors* on which to capture thoughts.

Create two flipchart papers respectively titled *Strengths* and *Risk Factors* on which to capture thoughts.

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Levels of Risk

- **High Risk: severe** abuse/neglect
 - A significant likelihood that a severe form of abuse/neglect will occur in the near future
- **Moderate Risk: serious** abuse/neglect
 - A significant likelihood that a serious form of abuse/neglect will occur in the near future
- **Low Risk: minor** abuse/neglect
 - A significant likelihood that a minor form of abuse/neglect will occur in the near future
- **No Risk**

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Risk Assessment Summary

- The following information should be contained in the narrative:
 - Specific evidence supporting all High and Moderate risk conclusions;
 - Justification for all Unable to Assess ratings;
 - Rationale for the Overall Severity Rating;
 - Conclusions regarding Overall Risk ratings – including information regarding how all factors interact as well as the affects of “clusters” of risk factors and/or dangerous combinations of factors
 - An assessment of safety and the plan to provide safety for the child/ren
 - A prioritization of the problems within the family and an assessment of how the family strengths can be used in case planning

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Types of Assessments, (revisited)

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Goal of Risk Assessment , (revisited)

- To evaluate risk of future harm to a child.
- To assess risk to determine if maltreatment is likely to occur or reoccur in the future.
- To apply the identified risk factors to case planning.

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Goal of Risk Assessment, (revisited), (cont'd)

- Three ways in which we hope to meet that goal are:
 - Thoroughly assess risk through a comprehensive evaluation.
 - Means to document a decision regarding level of risk.
 - Supports facilitation of the delivery of services by focusing resources, and efforts on moderate and high risk factors.

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Question and Answer



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