

CLIENT SERVICE PLANNING
APPENDIX K - CHILD ENDANGERMENT RISK ASSESSMENT
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A. Requirements for Use of the Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol

The **Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol (CERAP)** is utilized within the larger protocols of CPI and CWS practice. It is a "life-of-the case" protocol designed to provide workers with a mechanism for quickly assessing the potential for moderate to severe harm immediately or in the near future and for taking quick action to protect children. Workers utilize the Protocol to help focus their decision-making to determine whether a child is safe or unsafe and, if unsafe, deciding what measures or actions must be taken to assure the safety of the child. The major steps which are required to apply the Protocol include an assessment and analysis of the safety factors, the completion of the **CFS 1441, Safety Determination Form**, implementing and monitoring of the safety plan when necessary.

Department staff and contracted private agency staff are required to utilize the Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol (CERAP) and complete the CFS 1441 at the specified time frames and at any other time when the worker suspects or believes that a child may be unsafe. The CERAP helps to assess the safety of each child with whom there is contact, either through child protection services or child welfare services.

B. Definitions

"Degree of Harm" means the severity of harm which could range from slight to moderate to severe.

"Immediate" means that an incident can happen now or in the very near future.

"Moderate to Severe Harm" means the threat of danger to a child's life or health, impairment to his or her physical or mental well-being or disfigurement.

** **"Near Future"**

"Risk Determination" means the likelihood of any degree of long-term future harm or maltreatment.

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**** "Risk Factors"**

**** "Safe"**

"Safety Determination" means a child is considered to be safe when an assessment of available information supports the belief that a child in a household or in custodial care is not in immediate (or near future) danger of moderate to severe harm.

**** "Safety Factors"**

C. Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol

The Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol (CERAP) is a process whose purpose is to identify the risk of moderate to severe harm (i.e. "safety" concerns) in the immediate future. When such immediate risk to the child's safety is identified, the protocol requires the implementation of a safety plan to control or immediately resolve or reduce the potential imminent risk of moderate severe harm to the child(ren). These safety concerns and the safety plan to control them must be documented on the CFS 1441, Safety Determination Form. The Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol (CERAP) is a process that is NOT unique to just one stage of a case, but is to be adhered to throughout the life of an open case from the initial intake (child protection or child welfare) through services to case closure. This protocol must be integrated with the Department's ongoing determination of "longer-term risk of harm" which is currently documented on the CFS 1440 series of forms and which serves as a basis for client service planning efforts to resolve long-term risk issues.

1. Safety and Risk

Safety is best understood when it is compared to risk. Safety and risk of children are determined by the consideration of behavior, condition, and accessibility of the child(ren) and the persons who have contact with the child(ren). Safety is a subset of the broader concept of risk, therefore all factors which apply to safety also apply to risk. However, not all risk factors apply to safety because safety is a form of risk which is more precisely defined or specialized.

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Safety concerns are restricted to the essential criteria of "immediacy and degree of harm". Since risk allows a broader concept for evaluation of the family, safety concerns are depicted within the broader meaning of risk. The purpose of the broader area of risk is not control, but rather to decrease the risk of future maltreatment and resolve problems that cause risk. Safety factors are to be controlled and risk factors are to be resolved or reduced.

2. Similarities Between Safety and Risk

Safety and risk are similar in some very important ways, one being the prediction of harm. In the case of both safety and risk, there is a concern about the potential for future harm. Past harm and threats of future harm may describe both an immediate and long-term concern regarding a child's safety and are common to safety and risk.

Safety and risk both relate to the conditions of the home environment, or the behavior or the physical/mental condition of a family member or an interaction in the family. These conditions may predict immediate or short-term potential for harm (safety) or longer-term potential for harm (risk). Safety and risk elements can change quickly. Often they can be controlled or reduced by utilizing family strengths or other mitigating strengths and circumstances. In some cases, it may be necessary to address the problems with specific interventions designed to protect the child.

3. Differences Between Safety and Risk

The time element is the major difference between safety and risk. Safety means now or in the very near future and risk means longer-term. Safety and risk also differ by the degree of harm or the severity of the potential harm. Primarily, safety concerns itself with the potential for moderate to severe harm but risk is concerned with a full range of severity of harm from low to severe.

The primary purpose of safety is to control the situation to prevent harm from occurring in the short-term while the primary purpose of risk is to reduce or resolve the problems that lead to risk. Safety and risk both require intervention in order to prevent harm, but safety must always be assessed quickly while risk may be assessed over a longer period of time.

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D. Instructions for Completing the Safety Determination Form

The Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol must be completed on the **CFS 1441, Safety Determination Form**, minimally at the following times:

1. For child protection purposes (investigation):
 - o Within 24 hours after the investigator first SEES the alleged child victim(s) and all other children in the home.
 - o Whenever circumstances suggest that the child's (ren) safety may be in jeopardy.
2. For child welfare services (follow-up):
 - o Within five working days after case assignment. (The children must be SEEN in order for the safety assessment to be conducted.)
 - o Whenever evidence or circumstances suggest that the child's (ren) safety may be in jeopardy, regardless of the placement of the child(ren).
 - o Every six months (from case opening) on intact family cases.
 - o Immediately prior to returning a child home. (Assess the child's safety in the child's return home environment.)
 - o When considering the commencement of unsupervised visits.
 - o Before each Administrative Case Review where one or more child(ren) are still in placement or one or more child(ren) are still in the home. (Document the conditions or behavior which continue to prevent return home and to document the continuous safety of any child(ren) still in the home.)
 - o Immediately prior to closing a service case.
3. The Risk Assessment Protocol must be completed in five sequential steps which correspond with the order of the **CFS 1441**:

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a) Section 1: Safety Assessment (pages 1 & 2)

Step 1 (Part A, Safety Factor Identification) - Identify which of the 14 safety factors listed on the CFS 1441 relate to behaviors or conditions which may be associated with child(ren) who are in immediate danger of moderate to severe harm by checking the "YES" box corresponding to the identified factor. ALL child(ren) in the home, whether alleged victims or not, are to be assessed. When assessing the child(ren)'s safety, consider the effect that adults who have contact with the child(ren) may have on the safety of the child(ren).

Step 2 (Part B, Safety Factor Description) - When safety factors have been identified, record the safety factor by number from Section 1 A, page 1 and describe how the particular factor relates to specific individuals, behaviors, conditions and circumstances.

Step 3 (Part B, Mitigating Circumstances/Family Strengths) - When safety factors are recorded, describe any mitigating circumstances and the family strengths which may serve to control or manage the safety factors. Sometimes the presence of a safety factor can be partially or fully controlled or eliminated by a family strength or mitigating circumstance. Therefore, consider all of the factors known about family strengths when making a decision regarding safety.

When there are no safety factors which were checked "YES", the available information which indicates that none of the child(ren) are likely to be in immediate danger of moderate to severe harm is to be summarized.

b) Section 2: Safety Decision (page 3)

Step 4 (Safe/Unsafe Decision) - Identify the safety decision as safe or unsafe based upon the assessment of all safety factors and any other information which is known about the case. When a decision is made that the child(ren) are "UNSAFE", a safety protection plan must be developed and implemented to avoid immediate danger to the child(ren).

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c) Section 3: Safety Protection Plan

Step 5 (Development/Implementation) - When the category of "UNSAFE" is checked in Section 2, a safety protection plan must be developed. A safety protection plan is implemented when it is likely that a child could be moderately or severely harmed now or in the very near future. The plan must be based on the safety assessment which indicates whether safety factors are a concern but also if there are mitigating factors that would permit the child to remain at home if a protective plan is developed and implemented. After the safety protection plan has been developed, it must be implemented to ensure that all of the designated tasks are completed effectively. The plan is to contain a time frame for implementation and a contingency plan if the primary safety protection plan is no longer useful. The worker who is responsible for implementing the plan must explain the plan to the family and, whenever the family has an active role in carrying out the plan, obtain the family's commitment to cooperate and participate in carrying out the plan. The worker shall document the family's agreement and commitment in the appropriate case record. The worker shall develop a backup plan which will be documented whenever necessary, particularly when family members have an active role in carrying out the primary goal.

The safety protection plan is to be used to control and manage the situation until a more stable/permanent change can take place. This step requires a written description of what will be done or what actions will be taken to protect the child(ren), who will be responsible for implementing the components of the safety protection plan and how/who will monitor the safety protection plan.

The worker (DCFS or Purchase of Service) who initiates a safety plan is continuously responsible for implementation of the safety plan and the safety of the child(ren). If services to a child(ren) and family are to be transferred to another worker (DCFS or POS) after the safety plan has been initiated, the worker who initiated the safety plan will remain responsible for the safety plan until the responsibility for services to the child(ren) and family are effectively transferred to another worker. This responsibility is applicable regardless of whether the worker is DCFS or POS staff.

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d) Section 4: Signatures and Distribution of Form

The completed CFS 1441, Safety Determination Form must be signed and dated by the worker (DCFS or contracted private agency staff) after completion. The respective supervisor or designee shall sign the completed CFS 1441 within 24 hours after the worker has signed it.

The completed CFS 1441 shall be filed in the child/family case file of the child protection investigator or the child welfare worker and forwarded to the appropriate service worker when a case is transferred.

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