

Present Danger Threat: An immediate, significant and clearly observable family condition that is actively occurring or “in process” of occurring at the point of contact with a family and will likely result in severe harm to a child

SAFETY APPENDIX 1

Present Danger Threats to Child Safety DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES

Maltreatment

- **The child is being maltreated at the time of the report or at initial contact**
This means that the child is being maltreated at the time the report is being made, maltreatment has occurred the same day as the initial contact, or maltreatment is in process at the time of the initial contact. This does not include chronic neglect that is reported as being ongoing but does not necessarily meet the criteria for present danger.
- **Severe to extreme maltreatment of the child is suspected, observed, or confirmed**
This includes severe or extreme forms of maltreatment and can include severe injuries, serious unmet health needs, cruel treatment, and psychological torture.
- **The child has multiple or different kinds of injuries**
This generally refers to different kinds of injuries, such as bruising and burns, but it is acceptable to consider one type of injury on different parts of the body.
- **The child has injuries to the face or head**
This includes any kind of physical injury to the face or head of the child alleged to be the result of maltreatment.
- **The maltreatment demonstrates bizarre cruelty**
This includes such things as locking up children, torture, extreme emotional abuse, etc.
- **The maltreatment of several victims is suspected, observed, or confirmed**
This refers to more than one child currently being maltreated, rather than other children having been maltreated in the past. This does not include chronic ongoing neglect cases, where there is more than one alleged child victim, if the neglect situation does not meet the criteria for present danger.
- **The maltreatment appears premeditated**
The maltreatment appears to be the result of a deliberate, preconceived plan or intent.

- **Dangerous (life threatening) living arrangements are present**
This is based on specific information reported which indicates that a child's living situation is an immediate threat to his/her safety. This includes serious health and safety circumstances such as unsafe buildings, serious fire hazards, accessible weapons, unsafe heating or wiring, etc. It is dependent upon the age and self-protective capacities of the child.
- **The current report represents a serious threat to the child and there is a history of reports**
This threat requires no qualification about the nature of the previous reports as in whether they were minor or serious. Family history of reports should always be considered in relation to other threats when making judgments about present danger threats to a child. Serious is consistent with moderate to extreme maltreatment associated with serious family difficulties or stresses, questionable protective capacities, and concerning parental behavior.
- **The child is accessible to a maltreater**
This is a present danger threat if the suspected maltreatment is severe to extreme. This applies to circumstances where the maltreater has current access as well as where the maltreater will have access in the very near future, such as at the end of the school day. This also refers to situations where there is only one parent/caregiver, who is isolated from others, and therefore, spends significant amounts of time providing care for a child.

Child

- **Parent's viewpoint of child is bizarre.**
This refers to an extreme viewpoint that could be dangerous for the child, not just a negative attitude toward the child. It is consistent with the level of seeing the child as demon possessed.
- **Child is unable to care for self and unsupervised or alone at the time of the report**
This only applies if the child is truly without care, it does not apply to a person complaining that the parent has left the child with them and hasn't picked the child up yet. It also only applies to a child left unsupervised now. If the child was unsupervised the previous night but is not alone now, it is not a present danger threat of harm.
- **Child needs medical attention at the time of the report**
This applies to a child of any age. To be a present danger threat of harm, the medical care required must be significant enough that its absence could seriously affect the child's health and well-being. Lack of routine medical care is not a present danger threat.
- **Child is fearful or anxious of the home situation at the time of the report**
This applies to children who are described as being obviously afraid of their home situation, their present circumstances, or of a person because of a personal threat.

Parent

- **Parent is intoxicated (alcohol or other drugs) now or is consistently under the influence**
This refers to a parent who is intoxicated or under the influence of drugs most of the time. The parent's ability to care for the child is more important than the use of a substance (drinking compared to intoxicated). Special consideration should be given in cases where methamphetamine use or the manufacturing of methamphetamine is reported. CPS should coordinate the response with law enforcement.
- **Parent is out of control (mental illness or other significant lack of control)**
This can include bizarre or dangerous behaviors as addressed below, but also includes mental or emotional distress where a parent cannot manage their behaviors in order to meet their parenting responsibilities related to providing basic, necessary care.

- **Parent is demonstrating bizarre behaviors**
This will require interpretation of the reported information and may include unpredictable, incoherent, outrageous, or totally inappropriate behavior.
- **Parents are unable or unwilling to perform basic care**
This only refers to those parental duties and responsibilities consistent with basic care or assuring safety, not to whether the parent is generally effective or appropriate.
- **Parent is acting dangerous now or is described as dangerous**
This includes a parent described as physically or verbally imposing and threatening, brandishing weapons, known to be dangerous and aggressive, currently behaving in an aggressive manner, etc.
- **Parents' whereabouts are unknown**
This includes situations when a parent cannot be located at the time of the report and this affects the safety of the child.
- **One or both parents overtly reject intervention.**
The key word here is "overtly." This means that the parents refuse access to the child. This means that the parents essentially avoid all CPS attempts at communication and completion of the initial assessment/investigation. In all likelihood this will be considered and acted upon as a present danger threat since it is probable that the overt rejection will begin at the initial contact or closely thereafter thus requiring a protective plan in order for the initial assessment/investigation to continue.
- **Both parents/caregivers cannot or do not explain the child's injuries and/or conditions.**
Parents/caregivers are unable or willing to explain maltreating conditions or injuries which are consistent with the facts.

Family

- **The family may flee**
This will require judgment of case information. Transient families, families with no clear home, or homes that are not established, etc., should be considered. This refers to families who are likely to be impossible or difficult to locate and does not include families that are considering a formal, planned move.
- **The family hides the child**
This includes families who physically restrain a child within the home as well as families who avoid allowing others to have contact with their child by passing the child around to other relatives, or other means to limit CPS access to the child.
- **Child is subject to present/active domestic violence**
This refers to presently occurring domestic violence and child maltreatment or a general recurring state of domestic violence that includes child maltreatment where a child is being subjected to the actions and behaviors of a perpetrator of domestic violence. There is greater concern when the abuse of a parent and the abuse of a child occur during the same time.
- **Family is isolated and there is a report of serious maltreatment**
This refers to both geographic and social isolation. This is a dependent threat, i.e. in and of itself, the isolation of a family is not a present danger threat.
- **Situation may/will change quickly and there is a report of serious maltreatment**
This is not truly a present danger threat of harm, but is pertinent in judging the need to respond in that the change in the situation may result in the loss of opportunity to gather important information