



Decisions to Place; Decisions to Return Home: Colorado's Safety and Risk Assessment Instruments

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**Keeping children safe should
be at the forefront of each
decision made by the child
welfare agency.**

Colorado uses Four Instruments

- Colorado Assessment Continuum
 - > Safety Assessment
 - > Risk Assessment
 - > Risk Re-assessment
 - > NCFAS-R



**Decisions about placement
are based on safety**



Decisions about opening a case and service delivery are based on safety, risk and family needs

Definition of Safe

Safe is a condition where there is no present or impending threat of moderate to severe harm to a vulnerable child from current known family conditions or the protective capacities in the family are sufficient to control existing dangers or threats of danger and protect the vulnerable child

Definition of Unsafe

A condition where there is a present or impending threat of moderate to severe harm to a vulnerable child from current known family conditions and protective capacities in the family are insufficient to control threats of danger

Moderate to Severe Harm is.....

Injury or damage to a child's health or life,
impairment to the child's physical or
mental well-being (including emotional);
or disfigurement or developmental
impairment.

Child Vulnerability

This encompasses things such as:

- Whether or not the child act provocatively or passively
- Whether a child seem powerless or defenseless
- The visibility of the child outside of the home
- The child's ability to communicate
- Whether the child is seen as a scapegoat
- Perpetrators access to the child
- The child's ability to meet basic needs

Protective Capacity

- Personal characteristics of caregivers that specifically and directly impact being protective of children.
 - > Caregiver has power to be protective on behalf of children.
 - > Caregiver already has protective capacity.

Safety involves a timeframe

Something that is actively occurring in the present, is about to occur or is likely to occur.

Safety is something that is immediate or imminent.

Safety

- The presence of or the threat of moderate to severe harm
- Safety takes into consideration the level of harm as well as timeframe for the harm.

RISK is

- The likelihood of any degree of longer term or future maltreatment.
- Risk does not consider the level of harm or a time frame in which that harm may occur

So... what do we do with risk???

- Identify areas that are increasing risk
- Identify services to reduce likelihood of future maltreatment
- Decrease the likelihood of future safety concerns
- Make decisions about voluntary services when there are no safety concerns but risk is moderate or high

Safety Assessment

- Six Assessment Areas
 - > Extent of maltreatment
 - > Surrounding circumstances of maltreatment
 - > Child functioning
 - > Adult functioning
 - > General parenting practices
 - > Disciplinary parenting practices

Safety Threshold Criteria

- Specific and observable
- Moderate to severe harm could result
- Harm is likely to occur if not resolved
- Out of control behavior: caregiver unable to control conditions and behaviors that threaten child safety.
- Vulnerable child

Safety Concerns Guide

- 15 safety concerns
- Each concern must meet safety threshold

Using the Safety Guidelines

- Read the first part which defines how a safety threat meets the threshold criteria.
- Read the bullet points for **examples** of what cases could look like to meet that safety threat.
- This is not an all inclusive list, they are **examples!**

At intake, GAL's should ask:

- What are the safety concerns you have identified?
- Is it possible to control for the safety concerns? Did you explore a safety plan?
- Are the kids at risk of future maltreatment?
- May I please get a copy of your assessment instruments?

In ongoing, GAL's should ask:

- Are the kids still unsafe?
 - > This may not be tied to completion of services
- Can the kids be returned home with a safety plan?
- Has risk been reduced so that there is less of a chance the kids will be maltreated in the future?
- What are the changes in family functioning?