



This script accompanies the movie and PowerPoint® presentation by the same name.

### **Present and Impending Danger, Child Vulnerability and Protective Capacity**

Welcome and thank you for participating in this E-learning module which will feature the key concepts in safety decision-making: Present and Impending Danger, Child Vulnerability and Protective Capacity.

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### **Module Objective**

Our objective is to build upon the previous e-learning module which introduced the six Information Domains of the information collection protocol, and demonstrate the link between these domains and safety decision-making.

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### **Safety Decision-Making Formula (1 of 2)**

When you have finished this module you will recognize the major components of the safety decision-making formula and understand how they relate to each other in the determination of child safety. The major components of the safety decision making formula are present or impending danger threats, plus or minus child vulnerability plus or minus caregiver protective capacity equals safe or unsafe.

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### **Foundation of Quality Decision Making**

Let's begin with a very quick review which establishes the information standards that are the foundation of quality safety decision making.

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### **Information Domains**

Module 1 featured the information domains which are critical to informing our knowledge and understanding of the family. These six domains, when fully explored and documented, provide the information we need to know about the family to accurately identify and assess for present and impending danger.

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### Safety Decision-Making Formula (2 of 2)

Ultimately, we gather this information about families because we must arrive at a decision about whether a child or children are safe or unsafe. Before we go any further let's make sure we have the same understanding on how the Safety Decision-Making Methodology defines these two critical constructs.

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### Definition of Safe

Let's start with the definition of safe. Children are considered safe when there are no present or impending danger threats, or the caregivers' protective capacities control existing threats. Let's compare this with our definition for unsafe and then use our formula to illustrate how the presence or absence of the inter-related constructs determine the safety decision.

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### Definition of Unsafe

In contrast, children are considered unsafe when they are vulnerable to the present or impending danger threats, and caregivers have insufficient protective capacity to control these existing threats.

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### Three Key Concepts

Let's take a closer look at the three key concepts in these definitions of Safe and Unsafe so you have a better understanding of what kind of conditions, behaviors, emotions and actions are clearly observable in the home which should provide sufficient information to accurately inform the safety decision making process.

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### Present Danger (1 of 2)

We will explore Present Danger first because it is the most obvious and always the first condition to address in any contact with a family.

Present danger is the immediate, significant and clearly observable severe harm or threat of severe harm that is occurring to a child at the present time, in other words, right now....and which requires an immediate safety action on the part of the worker.

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### **Examples of Present Danger (1 of 2)**

Some common examples of present danger include situations in which young children are left alone without adequate supervision or situations in which caregiver functioning is impaired to a severe degree and children are present and exposed to the danger which is likely to result in severe harm to the child.

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### **Examples of Present Danger (2 of 2)**

Examples of present danger include, but are not limited to: premeditated maltreatment, injuries to the face and head, life threatening living arrangements, bizarre cruelty toward a child, a child needing immediate medical care, a caregiver unable to provide basic care, and a caregiver out of control or under the influence of substances posing an immediate danger threat to the child.

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### **Present danger assessments**

Our assessment of present danger begins when the Hotline receives a call and they evaluate the degree to which the situation being reported is currently a threat of severe harm to a child. These are situations in which the response time would be immediate. Regardless of the initial response priority assigned by the Hotline the investigator always begins by identifying and assessing for present danger. They are beginning the process of gathering information in the six domains, with their focus on identifying and acting upon any present danger.

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### Present danger can happen at any time

It's important to keep in mind that present danger can arise at any point in the life of a case. Because family and individual circumstances are dynamic and not static in nature, assessment of present danger should be an on-going process, not limited to our first contact with the family and certainly not limited to just the front-end of our child protection system. At any point in time if the circumstances in the family present immediate, out of control and potentially severe threats to a child, happening in the present time, that is present danger and immediate action is required.

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### Present Danger (2 of 2)

So present danger captures those threats that are happening now. It is that "in your face" danger that is easy to recognize. And fortunately, we do not see present danger in most of the cases we receive.

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### Impending Danger (1 of 4)

Our second important concept after Present Danger, is Impending Danger.

Just as the word implies, this is danger that is not happening at this moment, but what we would more accurately describe as a "state of danger". So this is descriptive of those circumstances in which the child is in a position of continual or pervasive danger.

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### Impending Danger (2 of 4)

In contrast to present danger, impending danger is often not as obvious....but ironically, impending danger is more prevalent.

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### Examples of Impending Danger

Examples of impending danger include violent caregivers or other violent members in the household with vulnerable children or caregivers who do not demonstrate impulse control in the presence of vulnerable children.

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### Impending Danger (3 of 4)

These impending danger threats are family conditions that are specific and observable. In other words, they can be seen by you and others, and they can be described.

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### Impending Danger (4 of 4)

Impending danger threats are also imminent, which means they could or likely will occur in the near term. We are not making a specific estimate of when they will occur, but we are making a professional judgment that they will occur in the near future, and therefore, they require a controlling intervention.

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### Information reveals impending danger

Because Impending Danger threats are not as obvious, it makes the information gathering process even more critical, because it is the information in the six domains that will reveal for us what and how impending danger is operating in a particular family.

In the Discussion Guide which accompanies this E-learning module, you will be introduced to the specific list of present and impending danger threats which are contained in the Safety Decision Making Methodology. You will have an opportunity to review these threats, definitions and examples in more detail which will help you to understand and apply them.

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### Summary (Present Danger)

So far we have explored the first part of our equation....present and impending danger. Now we will move to the second part, child vulnerability.

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### Children Vulnerability (1 of 4)

Remember in our definitions of safe and unsafe, in order for a child to be unsafe, there must be threats of danger and they must be vulnerable to those threats. Children are vulnerable because they depend on others for protection and care.

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### Children Vulnerability (2 of 4)

Determining if a child is vulnerable to a specific danger threat involves both knowing about the child's ability to protect himself from threats and knowing how the child is able to care for himself.

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### Children Vulnerability (3 of 4)

Once again, the information from the six information domains gives us the information we need to determine child vulnerability. Criteria to consider include, but are not limited to: age, physical ability, cognitive ability, developmental status, emotional security and family loyalty.

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### Children Vulnerability (4 of 4)

The factors we just considered are the more obvious factors which help us to understand vulnerability. Some additional factors which may not be as obvious, but are equally important include: prior impact of maltreatment, a child's isolation from the community, a child's ability to anticipate or judge danger, a child's ability to articulate problems or danger and even situations in which a child's own behavior provokes a dangerous reaction from a caregiver.

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### Vulnerability of every child

In our assessment of safety, we must consider vulnerability for every child in the household, regardless of whether they were the reported victim in the original report. And our conclusion about child vulnerability to danger threats may be different for individual children, which will result in different actions in terms of safety planning.

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### Summary (Child Vulnerability)

So the second part of the equation is now complete.....we have an understanding of how each child is vulnerable, or not, to any identified danger threat. That includes both present and impending danger threats.

Now we move on to the final safety concept and the final part of our safety equation. Caregiver protective capacity.

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### Definition of Protective Capacity

Protective capacity is a specific quality that can be observed and understood to be part of the way a parent thinks, feels and acts that makes him or her protective.

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### Protective Capacities (1 of 2)

Protective capacities are cognitive, behavioral and emotional qualities supporting vigilant protectiveness.

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### Protective Capacities (1 of 2)

Let's take each one of these individually and examine them more closely.

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### **Cognitive Protective Capacity (1 of 2)**

Cognitive protective capacity refers to specific knowledge, understanding and perceptions that contribute to protective vigilance.

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### **Cognitive Protective Capacity (2 of 2)**

Some examples of cognitive protective capacity include: understanding of protective role; understanding and recognizing threats; recognition of a child's needs; reality oriented; accurate perception of a child; ability to accurately process and interpret various stimuli; and intellectually able.

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### **Behavioral Protective Capacity (1 of 2)**

Behavioral protective capacity refers to specific action, activity and performance that is consistent with and results in parenting and protective vigilance.

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### **Behavioral Protective Capacity (2 of 2)**

Some examples of behavioral protective capacity include: physical capacity and energy; impulse control; ability to set aside own needs; adaptive, assertive and responsive; takes action; and history of being protective

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### Emotional Protective Capacity (1 of 2)

Emotional protective capacity refers to specific feelings, attitudes and identification with the child and motivation that results in protective vigilance.

### Emotional Protective Capacity (2 of 2)

Some examples of emotional protective capacity include emotional bond with the child, positive attachment with the child, love sensitivity and empathy for the child; resiliency; stability; effectively meets own emotional needs and emotional control.

### Assessment of Protective Capacity

The assessment of these three types of protective capacity are critical to our safety decision-making process, because they tell us about the capacity of the caregivers and/or other adults living in the household, in terms of their ability to protect. It is important to keep in mind that your assessment of protective capacity should include all the adults in the home who have a caregiving role.

If we are making a determination that the maltreating caregiver is creating a Danger Threat, then that person can not be the person the agency looks to, to manage or control the threat in a safety plan. To be a threat, you have determined that their protective capacities are significantly diminished.

In summarizing this module, let's bring up our safety decision making chalkboard one more time to review the process from start to finish.

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### Safety Decision-Making

Once we have gathered sufficient information to form a picture of danger threats, child vulnerability and protective capacity, it is time to review all the information in totality to make the appropriate safety decision. This specific decision demands a logical, sequential process built on credible and relevant information.

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### Session Review

Let's review the steps as we conclude this session.

Step 1: Gather sufficient, relevant information

Step 2: Weigh the information against our criteria for present and impending danger to determine if one or more exist

Step 3: Determine child vulnerability to these identified threats, again using the sufficient information gathered.

Step 4. Determine if protective capacity exists to manage the specific identified threats.

Step 5: Reach a decision about whether the child is safe or unsafe.

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### Upcoming e-Learning Module

In Module four we will go into detail about what to do if a child is determined to be unsafe....how you develop a safety plan, and how you determine whether an in-home or an out-of-home plan will be sufficient.

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### Quiz Directions

Please proceed to answer the questions which follow and thank you for your participation.

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### Q1

Which of the following best defines impending danger?

Last week, Mr. Jackson whipped his nine-year-old stepson Jason with a belt resulting in extensive bruising over the child's right thigh and left buttock area. Jason reports he had difficulty sitting for two days after the incident.

- a. **A child being in a state of danger due to parent/caregiver behaviors, attitudes, motives, emotions and/or situations posing a specific threat of severe harm to a child.**

- b. 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 serious harm to a child, therefore requiring a prompt CPS “system” response.
- c. The point at which a negative family condition gets worse.
- d. It is the same as present danger.

### Q1 Answer

Answer (a) best describes impending danger. Answer (b) is incorrect because it is the definition for present danger. Impending danger is not clearly observable and actively occurring upon first contact with the family, that is why sufficient information collection helps us recognize the more subtle, disguised out of control family conditions that produce impending danger threats. Answer (c) is incorrect because negative family conditions and circumstances related to impending danger are representative of clearly identifiable danger threats, not simply the risk of maltreatment. Answer (d) is incorrect because present and impending danger are separate and distinct types of danger threats.

### Q2

Caregiver protective capacities are:

- a. Family resources
- b. General parenting practices including discipline and knowledge of child development
- c. Parenting strengths
- d. How a parent determines if their children are developing appropriately
- e. **Personal and parenting behaviors, cognitive, and emotional characteristics that specifically and directly associate with protecting one’s child(ren)**

### Q2 Answer

The correct answer is (e). Answers (a), (c) and (d) while potentially useful information to have, are not specific enough, that is, are not directly associated with the caregiver’s ability to protect their child in the form of cognitive, behavioral or emotional assets to qualify as protective capacities. Answer (b) is incorrect because it is a combination of the general parenting practice and disciplinary practice and behavior management information domains.

**Q3**  
The concept of “impending danger” recognizes that a child may be in a state of danger even though the threat is not immediate.

- a. **True**
- b. False

**Q3 Answer**  
Answer (a) is correct. While the threat is not immediate and actively occurring in your very presence the impending danger threat is generated from a pervasive state of out of control family conditions and is highly likely to occur in the imminent or very near future.

**Q4**  
When a danger threat has been identified in the home, only the alleged child victim’s vulnerability to the threat is assessed.

- a. True
- b. **False**

**Q4 Answer**  
Once a danger threat has been identified in the home, the vulnerability of all children is assessed, not just the alleged child victim making answer (b) the correct response.

**Q5**  
In terms of the identification and prevalence of danger threats . . . Present Danger is more prevalent but Impending Danger is typically more obvious.

- a. True
- b. **False**

### Q5 Answer

The correct answer is (b) false. It is just the opposite, by definition present danger is the more obvious “in your face” danger threat while the more subtle, but pervasive impending danger is much more prevalent in the family’s that typically you will come into contact in your line of work.

### Congratulations!

Congratulations on completing Module Two: Present and Impending Danger, Child Vulnerability and Protective Capacity

Within the week you should also complete the discussion guide that accompanies this module. If you are not watching the module as part of a group exercise facilitated by your supervisor or assigned safety practice expert please contact them for a copy of the discussion guide. The discussion guide is intended to provide additional resources and instruction so you can begin to apply the constructs introduced in this module.

One last thing, don’t forget to get credit for participating in this e-learning module by going to your individual training screen in FSFN and selecting the training course titled Module Two: Present and Impending Danger, Child Vulnerability and Protective Capacity. Again, thank you for your participation!