

Assessing

Gathering information about reported concerns and family needs, evaluating the relevance of that information, and identifying family strengths and community resources that may be applied to address those concerns and needs.

In Ohio's Differential Response system, a comprehensive assessment, including assessment of safety and risk, is completed with all families, regardless of the initial pathway assignment. Assessment is the process of gathering accurate, comprehensive information using relevant and credible sources of information, documenting the information using appropriate assessment tools, and objectively analyzing the information to determine the best course of action. When the assessment process is done well, the result is a clear, objective and detailed picture of family needs; child vulnerabilities related to safety, permanence and well-being; and the strengths and protective capacities of the family. The assessment process must inform next steps with the family, including safety planning, service planning, service provision and/or service termination. Assessment begins at the time of first contact with the family and continues throughout the life of the case. (Schene, 2005)

An assessment with investigation is conducted for child abuse or neglect reports assigned to the Traditional Response pathway. In these cases, a comprehensive assessment and an investigation determine the validity of the child maltreatment report and support a determination of child abuse and/or neglect.



Assessing Ideal

Developmental

Unacceptable

Conducts an assessment of child safety with all family members present, unless separate interviews are indicated or required by Ohio Administrative Code¹, and jointly plans with the family for any immediate safety needs.

Conducts an assessment of child safety with the caregiver and the child present, and addresses any immediate safety needs both with and without family input.

Conducts the initial assessment with minimal or no family participation. Pays insufficient attention to the child's (children's) safety concerns.

Gathers, includes and considers all the family members' perceptions of their strengths and the issues or problems they are facing, even if they are unable to recognize how the issues or problems create risk for children.

Gathers, includes and considers family members' perceptions of their strengths and issues, but efforts are inconsistent or not thorough. Inconsistently prompts the family to provide additional information.

Does not gather, include or consider assessment information from family members and/or does not include their perspectives about presenting issues, problems or strengths. Does not prompt the family to provide additional information.

Gathers, includes and considers detailed information from family members about the alleged incident of child maltreatment.

Inconsistently gathers, includes and considers detailed information from family members about the alleged incident of child maltreatment. Does not always ask clarifying questions of the family.

Does not gather, include or consider detailed information from family members about the alleged incident of child maltreatment. Reaches conclusions without supporting information.

Gathers thorough information from relevant sources (relatives, kin, service providers, etc.) to assess safety, risk and strengths; provide supportive services; and, as indicated, determine a disposition.

Inconsistently and/or incompletely gathers information from collateral and other relevant sources.

Gathers information in a limited manner.

Respects the family's privacy and exercises discretion in interviewing and gathering information specific to the family and allegation of child maltreatment.

Understands privacy issues at times, but demonstrates inability to balance the need for information with the privacy of the family.

Seeks or gathers information about family members without specific focus, parameters or respect for privacy.

Occasionally gathers information from sources that are not critical to assessing safety, risk or disposition determination.

¹ There may be compelling reasons to work with family members separately – for example, in cases with a mandatory exclusion from the Alternative Response pathway, intimate partner violence or child safety concerns.



Assessing Ideal

Developmental

Unacceptable

Gathers detailed information regarding factors known to create substantial risk to children (such as domestic violence, mental health issues, substance abuse) and the underlying causes of behavior and history as relevant to possible child maltreatment.

Gathers information that sometimes lacks sufficient detail regarding factors known to create substantial risk to children (such as domestic violence, mental health issues, substance abuse) and the underlying causes of behavior and history as relevant to possible child maltreatment.

Pays insufficient attention to factors known to create substantial risk to children (such as domestic violence, mental health issues, substance abuse). Often focuses only on the incident resulting in agency involvement. Does not gather information regarding underlying causes of behavior and history as relevant to possible child maltreatment.

Gathers detailed information about individual, family and environmental strengths and protective capacities that can mitigate risk.

Gathers information about individual, family and environmental strengths and protective capacities that can mitigate risk, but this information sometimes lacks sufficient detail.

Does not gather information regarding individual, family and environmental strengths and protective capacities that can mitigate risk.

Seeks and reassesses safety and risk information at each decision point and at prescribed intervals throughout the family's involvement with the agency.

Seeks and reassesses safety and risk information primarily at prescribed intervals and occasionally at decision points during the family's involvement with the agency.

Omits (intentionally or unintentionally) or disregards new safety and risk information and/or changes in the family's circumstances during involvement with the agency.

Regularly uses critical thinking during the assessment process. Assesses the validity and relevance of information gathered, suspends judgment until all relevant information is gathered, and synthesizes assessment information. Clearly uses assessment and/or investigative data to inform safety planning, disposition determination as appropriate, family service/case planning, and/or case closure.

Inconsistently uses critical thinking during the assessment process. Does not always collect all relevant information before drawing conclusions. Does not always determine the relevance or significance of certain details as they relate to child safety and/or family well-being; disposition determination if necessary; identification of appropriate service and supports; and/or planning for case closure.

Does not use assessment process for intended purpose. Draws conclusions before all relevant information is gathered and analyzed or is unable to formulate conclusions. Does not possess critical thinking skills as evidenced by inability to articulate the relationship between information gathered and decision-making, including safety planning, disposition determination if necessary, family service and case planning, and/or case closure.

